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THE MESSAGE OF THE PROPHETS OF ISRAEL TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

BY

HERBERT L. WILLETT

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THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF SACRED LITERATURE
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REMARKS

FOREWORD TO THE STUDENT

In the study of the prophets, the work will be greatly increased in value by the reading of books calculated to give a keener historical appreciation of the times in which the prophets lived and worked. If a group of people are studying the course together, the provision of one book by each member of the group solves the problem of a club library. If the work is being done in the vicinity of a public library, it is altogether probable that a suggestion to add the books needed by the club to its resources would be acceptable to the library. The following brief list will be supplemented on request to the headquarters of the Institute:

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In the preparation of these courses it is first of all assumed that the work is to be done by the student and that the leader of the class is seeking to gather up the results of the student's work rather than to assume the attitude of a teacher. In those groups, however, which are taught in the fashion of a Sunday-school class or other weekly class in which no work upon the part of the student can be counted upon, the passages may be read and discussed in class.

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INTRODUCTION

The modern student of the Bible, in the effort to understand its content and message, seeks to avail himself of the aid offered by the study of religious and social conditions among the peoples who formed the environment of the biblical preachers and writers.

The most important of these nations, from the point of view of its influence upon our own ethical and spiritual ideas, and upon the higher life of the world at large, was the Hebrew people.

The present series of studies concerns itself with the prevailing conceptions of religion and morals among the Hebrews during the classic period of their history.

SCOPE OF THE COURSE

The course will consist of ten monthly studies, covering the centuries in which Israel passed through its most eventful stages of growth and decline, and dealing with the men who most effectively shaped the curve of its higher life.

It is not the purpose of the course to present an exhaustive study of the religion and morals of Israel. But the object is to provide the student with the means for a first-hand acquaintance with the work of the great moral leaders whose influence was most significant in forming the ideals of that nation and the wider world.

In the attainment of this object, sufficient reading from the Bible will be required to illustrate the leading ideals and purposes of each one of these religious teachers of ancient Israel. A definite section of the Bible will be designated for daily study. This method is not intended to be inflexible, however. If the student prefers, the division into days may be ignored.

THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament, or Hebrew Scriptures, upon which these studies are based, is a collection of documents comprising the total surviving literature of the Hebrew nation during the period when the Hebrew language was a living speech.

Its literature includes the records of individual and national experiences, public discourses, national laws and institutes, meditations upon the important problems of life, hymns and lyrics, and apocalyptic visions.

The writings of the Old Testament represent many periods of Israel's history, and many points of view. But from them the student is able to secure a fairly consistent idea of the development of religion and ethics in one of the most important nations of antiquity.

ISRAEL AS A NATION

The Hebrews were a branch of the great Semitic race, which included such nations as the Assyrians, Babylonians, Arabs, Aramaeans, and Phoenicians.

Their ancestors migrated from the region of the Euphrates to the Mediterranean coastland some fifteen hundred years or more before Christ, and after varied experiences in Canaan, Egypt, and the southern desert, they became the dominant race in the region later known as Palestine.

Here for seven centuries, beginning about 1200 B.C., they flourished, first as a united people, then broken into two divisions, north and south; and with alternations of success and failure, they contended with neighboring nations, such as the Philistines, Syrians, Assyrians, and Babylonians.

In later centuries, during the dominance of Persian, Greek, and Roman power, they were reduced in territory and numbers to a provincial condition, and finally, in the first century A.D., the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans put an end to Jewish nationality.

THE RELIGION OF ISRAEL

But although the political fortunes of Israel were never brilliant for more than brief periods, and at last came to tragic failure, the contributions made by this people to ethics and religion were among the most remarkable known to history.

In this small country, in the midst of the varied experiences of war and peace, prosperity and distress, pastoral, agricultural, and urban life, independence and subjection, there were developed such ideals of conduct and such conceptions of the infinite as have given ancient Israel the right to a unique position as a spiritual teacher of the race.

Gradually emerging in their national life there appeared the principles of reverence for a God of ethical character, imageless and holy; the employment of ritual not as an end but as a means of moral excellence; obedience to the ideals of truth, honesty, purity, and justice, as the qualities of Deity and as essential to his approval; and the obligations of the individual, the family, the community, and the nation to exhibit the character approved by the divine patron and ruler.

RELATION OF THE RELIGION OF ISRAEL TO ITS HISTORY

It is natural that the religion of any people should be strongly influenced by the national environment and experience. Locality, climate, ancestral tendencies, and political fortunes are all important factors in determining the character of the national faith.

Israel was no exception to this rule, but rather one of its most conspicuous illustrations. History and religion reacted upon each other in a remarkable manner among those dwellers in the uplands of Palestine. Contact with other clans and nations, as the result of war or commerce, brought the contagion of idolatry and immorality, which roused the fierce opposition of moral leaders, and wrought out for Israel an ethical program of unique character.

It is impossible to form an intelligent opinion regarding the religion of Israel, which formed the background of early Christianity, without a competent knowledge of Hebrew history. The varying political fortunes of the nation affected profoundly its ethical and religious condition. It is essential, therefore, that the present series of studies should include some adequate review of the history.

THE NEED OF PROPHETS

Perhaps the most unique feature of Israel's religious life was the presence and influence of prophecy—a term used to describe the preaching of righteousness by a group of men who in successive periods assumed the task of moral leadership, and interpreted to the nation the principles of morality and religion.

Prophets were not unknown in other lands. Outside of Israel there were men who corresponded in some degree to these moral leaders. But nowhere else did the prophetic order attain the significance and influence which it exhibited among the Hebrews. To this fact is due the unique place which Israel reached among the spiritual forces of history.

The prophet was not the only interpreter of religion in Israel. The priests ministered at the sanctuaries, interpreted oracles, and taught the national institutes. The wise men or sages gave instruction regarding the problems of life, and counseled those who resorted to them for practical advice. But the prophets were the vital force in the stimulation of Israel's better life, and their influence was felt profoundly throughout the history.

PROPHETIC ACTIVITIES

The prophets did not belong to any particular clan or tribe, like the priests. They were men who were moved by the circumstances of their lives and by the spirit of God to undertake the work of protest, instruction, and reform.

Most of them were preachers, finding their audiences when and where they could, and making known the will of the national God as they understood it.

They traveled about from place to place, like Samuel, or remained in a single city, like Isaiah. They illustrated their messages with stories from the past experiences of the nation, or the lives of its ancestral heroes.

On some occasions they made clearer their meaning by symbolic acts, or by sympathetic works of healing.

They endeavored to improve the moral character of the communities in which they resided, and to purify the religious conditions of their age. Their ideals were better social relations, the approval of the divine Ruler of the state, and a more glorious future for the nation.

PROPHETIC WRITINGS

The prophets preached the national faith. They were the interpreters of the divine will. Some of them also wrote down their messages, as means of reaching wider communities, or providing a record for public instruction. Thus there came to be collections of prophetic writings. These writings are among the most important portions of the Old Testament, and are known as the prophetic books. One section of them includes the prophetic records of national experience, the story of the past, as it was told by these preachers of righteousness. Among such books are Judges, Samuel, and Kings.

The other group of prophetic books comprises such as bear the names of prophets, and contain the messages which have been preserved to us from those preachers. Among such are Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah, Jeremiah.

RELATION TO EARLY CHRISTIANITY

To all students of the New Testament the Hebrew Scriptures are of profound importance, and particularly the prophetic writings. Only through a competent acquaintance with them are the conditions and ideals of the Christian society to be understood.

Jesus himself grew up in the atmosphere of the great prophets, and nourished his religious life upon their utterances. His first interpreters appealed to the prophetic oracles as the final authority in their vindication of his mission.

By the Christian church the religious and social ideals of the prophets of Israel were gathered up and, under the leadership of Jesus and the apostles, carried to their highest value. The gospel is the completion and fulfilment of prophetic hopes.

THE PURPOSE OF THESE STUDIES

It is the aim of this series of studies:

1. To provide the student with some competent knowledge of the literature of the Old Testament, particularly its prophetic portions.

2. To afford a means of understanding the most important portions of Hebrew history.

3. To disclose the intimate relations between that history and the religious life which it produced.

4. To make clear the leading religious and social ideals of the Hebrews, the nation that has exercised a larger influence upon the ethics and religion of the world than any other people of antiquity.

5. To show the relationship between these teachings and those of early Christianity.

6. To disclose the permanent elements in the teachings of the moral leaders of Israel, and their value for every age and all mankind.

STUDY I

EARLY HEBREW IDEALS—MOSES, SAMUEL, ELIJAH

First day.—§ 1. *Migration of Abram (Abraham)*: Gen. 12:1–9. Note that according to this passage the patriarchal traditions of the Hebrews affirmed that their ancestors migrated from the region of Southern Babylonia, in obedience to the divine command. They came into Canaan (Palestine), and lived as unsettled clans in various parts of the land.

Second day.—§ 2. *Israel's migration to Egypt:* Gen. 42:1, 2; 43:1, 2; chaps. 37–41; 46:29–34; 47:1–12. The three generations of patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, lived in Canaan, their clans growing in numbers and wealth. Famine at length compelled the family of Jacob to secure provisions from Egypt. Read Gen. 42:1, 2; 43:1, 2. Providential events had brought Joseph, the favorite son, into power in Egypt. Read Gen., chaps. 37–41. By his favor the Hebrews were brought thither. Read Gen. 46:29–34; 47:1–12.

Third day.—§ 3. *The birth of Moses:* Exod. 1:1–14; 2:1–10. Time passed. The new dynasty in Egypt was unfavorable to foreigners. The Hebrews increased, in spite of repressive measures. Moses was born, and strangely preserved from death. Read the passage cited for the day.

Fourth day.—§ 4. *The exodus from Egypt:* Exod. 12:37–42; 13:17–22; also 2:11–22; chaps. 7–12; 14, 15:1–21. Exod. 2:11–22 tells us that Moses, prematurely attempting the deliverance of his people, was compelled to leave Egypt. His life in Midian was that of a shepherd. The sign of the burning bush was accepted as a summons to assist his people. The name of Jehovah was made known. Moses returned to Egypt. The misfortunes of Egypt, usually called the plagues, are related in Exod., chaps. 7–12, and the departure of the Israelites from Egypt in chap. 14, followed by the Song by the Sea in chap. 15:1–21.

Fifth day.—§ 5. *Early organization of Israel:* Exod. 18:1–27. In Exod. 18:1–27 we read of the journey of Israel into the desert, and the visit of Moses to his Midianite father-in-law, whose wise advice regarding organization and simple courts of justice was the solution of the immediate problem of law and order. It shows at this stage Midianite influence on Israel's life.

Sixth day.—§ 6. *An early code of Hebrew laws:* Exod. 20:1–17; 34:10–28; Deut. 5:6–21. All nations have had bodies of laws, which grew out of inherit-

ance from the past, or from the organization of custom into law. The "Ten Words," or "Ten commandments" (read in Exod. 20:1–17), constitute such a code. They are evidently quite old, and were traditionally associated with the name of Moses. The earliest form is found in Exod. 34:10–28. The more common form is that given in the text, and, with slight modifications, in Deut. 5:6–21. Read these passages and note the differences. It was a code of law adapted to the needs of a people living a simple nomadic or agricultural life. But re-read carefully and note that the ethical and religious tone is very high, and as a brief statement of fundamental principles of conduct, it has come to wide, almost universal, acceptance.

Seventh day.—§ 7. *Other early Hebrew laws:* Exod., chaps. 20–23, especially 21:1–36. An excellent idea of the early standards of conduct set up among the Hebrews may be gained from Exod., chaps. 20–23, together with a supplementary document in Exod., chap. 34. A part of this material is taken for the present study. Exod. 20:24–26 illustrates the ideas of simplicity; 21:2–11, 20, 21–24, kindness to servants and to strangers; 21:15, 17; 22:28, reverence; 21:18, 19, 26, 27, 33, 34; 22:5, 6, the necessity for compensation in cases of injury, and other principles. Most of all, this group of laws makes clear the fact that an equivalent must be exacted for all injuries. It modified the severity of inflicting death for all offenses, as had some ancient codes, and demanded only an equivalent. Note Exod. 21:12, 23–25. This was a long step toward the law of forgiveness enunciated by Jesus, as given in Matt. 5:38–42.

Eighth day.—§ 8. *The promise of a line of prophets:* Deut. 18:9–22. In the Book of Deuteronomy many traditions regarding Moses' character and teaching are preserved. One of these relates to the appearance of a prophet from time to time as an interpreter of the will of God. Read Deut. 18:9–22. It was the hope that God would not leave himself without a witness among the people. The line of prophets was in a true sense the fulfilment of this promise, though the popular interpretation of the passage referred it to some particular prophet who was to arise in the distant future. Read John 1:21; 7:40.

Ninth Day.—§ 9. *The character of Moses:* Exod. 32:7–35; Num. 12:3; Deut. 34:7, 10–12. Read the first passage and note that Moses is represented as pleading the cause of the nation, after its relapse into idolatry. Jehovah, angry with Israel, is threatening to destroy the people, and offers to make Moses the head of another and better nation. With true generosity and noble disinterestedness, Moses begs that the divine forgiveness be extended. Note the passionate earnestness of his cry to Jehovah in vs. 32. The striking and primitive description of the divine anger, and the lofty character of Moses' devotion, make this one of the most notable of commentaries on the popular regard in which Moses was held. For further light on this point read Num. 12:3 and Deut. 34:7, 10–12.

Tenth day.—§ 10. *The death of Moses:* Deut. 34:1–12. Though not permitted, as this passage tells us, to enter Canaan with his people, Moses was given the privilege of seeing the future home of Israel from the mountain heights of Nebo. The mystery of his death and burial added to the regard in which he was held by the people. To him, as Israel's first lawgiver, it became the custom to attribute all the laws of the nation, and even to this day the first five books of the Old Testament bear in their titles the mark of this custom.

Eleventh day.—§ 11. *Israel's occupation of Canaan:* Judg. 1:1–36. After the death of Moses, the tribes of Israel began their efforts to obtain a footing in Canaan. Of this period there are two narratives, the older one in Judg., chaps. 1, 2, and the later in the Book of Joshua. According to the record in Judges, which is largely from prophetic sources, the various tribes acted independently, and secured whatever portions of the central mountain region they could obtain. In this effort they were only partially successful, considerable districts remaining in the hands of the Canaanites. But the people secured a foothold, and gradually dominated the entire country.

Twelfth day.—§ 12. *The Judges:* Judg. 2:1–23; 17:6; 21:25. Read the passages. The first period of Israel's history in Canaan was one of warfare, struggle, lack of organization, and absence of any political or religious coherence. Judg. 17:6 and 21:25 give the keynote: "There was no king in Israel in those days, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes." In emergencies there arose volunteer leaders in the various parts of the land where there was danger. These men were called judges, though their functions were rather military than judicial. The Book of Judges is the record of some of their achievements, and of other events which illustrate the rude character of the age.

Thirteenth day.—§ 13. *Gideon's victory:* Judg. 7:1–25. Of the judges mentioned in this book, some of the most important were Deborah and Barak, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson. The story of Gideon illustrates the character of the services rendered by such leaders. Read the narrative beginning in chap. 6, and note how the fortunes of Israel were regarded as shaped by the divine will, through providential events. This principle is characteristic of all the narratives of the book.

Fourteenth day.—§ 14. *The birth of Samuel:* I Sam. 1:1–28; chap. 2. The Books of Samuel are among the most important of the prophetic records of Israel. Read the first passage cited and note that in this narrative the parents of Samuel, pious Ephraimites, are given the long-desired child. The sanctuary, probably one of many, was at Shiloh. The place of priesthood, sacrifices, and vows in the life of the people is interesting. Hannah's hymn of rejoicing in chap. 2 is a beautiful Hebrew poem from an early date.

Fifteenth day.—§ 15. *Samuel's call:* I Sam. 2:12–36; 3:1–21. The family of Eli, the priest, was threatened with extinction because of its unworthy conduct (2:12–36). Samuel, reared at the sanctuary in Shiloh, becomes conscious of his growing duty and responsibility. The awakening of his nature to the divine purpose for him is beautifully represented in the account of his night summons and the warning message conveyed to him. Read I Sam. 3:1–21, and observe that Samuel's growing leadership is recognized by the people.

Sixteenth day.—§ 16. *Samuel's ministry:* I Sam. 4:1—7:1, 2–4; 13:5; 14:52. Read I Sam. 4:1—7:1 and note that it tells the story of Philistine aggressions against Israel, the defeat of the Hebrew army, the sack of Shiloh, and the experience of the Ark in the hands of the Philistines. One can see that against these powerful enemies Israel had no adequate means of defense. Now read I Sam. 7:2–4, and see that it describes with remarkable brevity the events of a score of years. Recall that the Hebrews since their wilderness wanderings had identified the presence of Jehovah with his symbol, the Ark. Note that during these twenty years when the Ark was on the borderland of Philistia rather than in a more central location, the people are said to have "mourned after Jehovah." Samuel living again at his old home, Ramah (read vss. 15–17), traveled about the country, and wherever he went he "judged" the people. Would you take this "judging" to be what we would ordinarily understand by that term, or a sort of combination of preaching and governing? Would you imagine that his meetings were something like a revival and a session of court in one? Note carefully what it was that Samuel enjoined upon the people (vs. 3)—the abandonment of idolatry and faithfulness to Jehovah. (Remember in passing judgment yourself upon the people, that the Baalim and the Ashtaroth were the common gods of the Canaanites among whom the Hebrews had settled and from whom they were adopting many habits of life.) The sense of unity, dependence upon Jehovah, and confidence in Samuel shown in the Mizpah episode of 7:5–14 illustrates the progress made by the nation during these twenty years. Consult a map and locate carefully the cities of the region. Does the statement in 7:13 seem too strong, in the light of later incidents such as 13:5 and 14:52?

Seventeenth day.—§ 17. *Samuel and the kingship:* Judg. 17:6; 18:1; 21:25; 8:22; 9:50; I Sam. 9:1–10: 16; 8:1–22; 10:17–27. As we learn from the Book of Judges, 17:6; 18:1; 21:25, there was no king in Israel in these early days. The people tried to gain the consent of Gideon, one of their judges, to take that office, but he refused it. Read the story in Judg. 8:22; 9:50, and see how his son, Abimelech, attempted it, with tragic results. But Samuel's work had brought the people to the point of wishing a king. We have two sets of narratives dealing with Samuel's attitude toward this popular demand. Read I Sam. 9:1—10:16, the older account, and decide from it whether Samuel approved or disapproved of

the choice of a king, in the view of the writer. Then read the later account in I Sam. 8:1–22; 10:17–27, and see how strong is the writer's conviction that Israel should not have a king. Would you say that the work Samuel had done led naturally to a popular wish for a stronger and more centralized government, and was in reality a high compliment to Samuel's leadership?

Eighteenth day.—§ 18. *Samuel's defense of his administration:* I Sam. 12:1–25. Read this address carefully and compare it with those of other great leaders about to give up their work; e.g., Washington. Note the things which Samuel says cannot be charged against him. Are these the sort of tyrannies likely to be practiced by kings in all ages? What would be the qualities of such a king as Samuel would approve? Do you think this record has had any effect in shaping the world's standard of judgment regarding kings?

Nineteenth day.—§ 19. *Samuel's rebuke of Saul:* I Sam. 15:1–35. Amalek was a clan or tribe with which Israel had often had contests. Samuel's intense loyalty to Israel led him to believe that Jehovah wanted Amalek destroyed. Read in this passage how he sent Saul on that errand and with what merciless cruelty the work was carried out. Was it more barbarous than the custom of his time? We have seen that Samuel excelled his contemporaries in justice, honesty, and unselfishness as well as in statesmanship. Did he regard such cruelty as the will of God? Does this indicate that his ideal of the character of God, while superior to that of his time in many respects, was yet very imperfect? Note that in his interview with the returning king he utters one of the most fundamental truths of religion. What applications of this great saying could you make today?

Twentieth day.—§ 20. *Last days of Samuel:* I Sam. 16:1–13; 19:18–24; 25:1; 28:1–25. Four later references are made to Samuel in the narrative. Saul's kingdom came to an unhappy end and was succeeded by that of David. It was natural for the friends and biographers of the latter to wish to connect his name and government as much as possible with the great name of Samuel. Read I Sam. 16:1–13, for a tradition, no doubt widely believed, that Samuel actually had anointed David king at Bethlehem. Read also in I Sam. 19:18–24 the story of David taking refuge from the fury of King Saul, at Ramah with Samuel. These stories have many difficulties connected with them, but they reflect a current of popular feeling regarding David as the friend and protégé of Samuel. Read in I Sam. 25:1 the simple notice of Samuel's death. Do you think the public judgment regarding his greatness was justified? Why? The tradition preserved in I Sam. 28:1–25 is intended by the writer in part to show how Samuel was venerated even after his death.

Twenty-first day.—§ 21. *David and the Ark:* I Sam. 31; II Sam. (1:19–27); 5:1–12; 6:1–23. Read I Sam., chap. 31, for the story of Saul's overthrow and death, and in II Sam. 5:1–12 the account of the selection of David as king of

Israel. (The ancient song, II Sam. 1:19–27, gives us a sidelight upon David's character.) The loyalty of King David to Jehovah and his confidence in the current belief concerning the Ark as the symbol of His presence is seen in one of his earliest projects, the removal of the Ark, or sacred chest, from its obscure resting-place to a temporary sanctuary he prepared for it in Jerusalem, his new capital city. Read carefully the narrative in II Sam. 6:1–23, and note David's deep personal concern in all that happened, even to the extent of joining in the sacred dances in honor of the Ark. It was more than official interest; it was personal devotion.

Twenty-second day.—§ 22. *David's house established:* II Sam. 7:1–29. As soon as David brought the Ark of God to Jerusalem, the capital, he felt the need of a suitable sanctuary in which to place it. Read the story of his plans in II Sam. 7:1–3. Nathan, the official court prophet, seems to have approved these plans, at first, but later on questioned the wisdom of building a costly central structure. See vss. 4–9. He claimed that God had no need of such a building to dwell in, but that it was a noble thought of David's and, as an acknowledgment of it, God would build David a house—a family and a dynasty—that should endure. Read vss. 10–29. What social and religious considerations do you think entered into David's plan to build the temple?

Twenty-third day.—§ 23. *David and Nathan:* II Sam. 7:2; 11:1–27; 12:1–25. Nathan the prophet was a friend as well as an adviser of David. See II Sam. 7:2. Remaining at home while his army went out on a campaign, David appropriated to himself the wife of one of his captains, and, to cover his conduct, had her husband exposed to death. Read the story in II Sam. 11:1–27. Probably in any other nation of antiquity a king would have felt no compunctions of conscience at such conduct, nor would his people have protested. But in Israel there was a higher order of conscience. Read II Sam. 12:1–25, and note the fearless rebuke administered by the prophet Nathan to the king. Which do you think more notable, the fact that David should commit an act of this character, or that he should recognize the authority of moral law in the stings of his conscience and the rebuke of the prophet?

Twenty-fourth day.—§ 24. *The temple dedicated:* I Kings 2:12; chaps. 4, 6, 7, 8. David's successor was his son, Solomon. See I Kings 2:12. Read the narrative in I Kings 4:1–34 to learn something of the strength and wealth of Solomon's kingdom and of his own character. What social changes would Solomon's policy bring to Israel? Read also I Kings 6:1—7:51, and you will see that among the first great enterprises undertaken by Solomon was the building of a sanctuary such as his father David had hoped to build. Continue with I Kings 8:1–66, and note how elaborate and impressive were the services of dedication and what a conspicuous part the king had in it all. Do you think that

Solomon's interest lay chiefly in the promotion of a purer worship in Israel, or was he largely interested in the embellishment of his capital by such a beautiful structure?

Twenty-fifth day.—§ 25. *The prophets and the nation:* I Kings 11:26—12:24; 14:1–18. Read I Kings 11:26–40. Note the fact that Jeroboam of Ephraim was one of Solomon's leaders of levies, who later became a plotter against his master (vss. 26–28); that he was encouraged by the prophet Ahijah of Shiloh to head a revolt against the power of Solomon (vss. 29–40); that Ahijah and the other prophets represented the sentiment of protest against the autocracy, centralization, and irreligion of Solomon's program and that they were unable to make headway with their project during the reign of the king. Read I Kings 12:1–20, and find the sequel. This public convocation resulted in the rejection of Rehoboam by the northern tribes and the choice of Jeroboam as their leader. Thus the prophets seem to have been willing to rend the nation asunder rather than to further jeopardize the simplicities of the older Hebrew religion and morals. Read vss. 21–24. How did the prophets of the south regard the military measures with which Rehoboam planned to bring back his rebellious subjects? May the prophets be fairly regarded as in some sense a political party? Read the strange story told in I Kings 14:1–18, which shows that Ahijah continued for many years to be a notable figure at Shiloh.

Twenty-sixth day.—§ 26. *The coming of Elijah:* I Kings 15:25—17:24. Read I Kings 15:25—16:34, and note the rapid change of rulers in the kingdom of Israel and the turbulence of the times. The greatest ruler of the list was Ahab, whose wife was a Zidonian princess named Jezebel. Read I Kings 17:1–24, the account of the sudden appearance of the prophet Elijah as Ahab's conspicuous opponent and the champion of the worship of Jehovah. Is there any indication that Ahab himself was not a worshiper of Jehovah? Elijah's experiences by the brook Cherith and at Zarephath, near Zidon, are old stories selected from many which must have arisen about so great a man as Elijah to show that he was under the special care and guidance of Jehovah and was regarded as Jehovah's special representative.

Twenty-seventh day.—§ 27. *The answer of fire:* I Kings, chap. 18. Read the story and note that it represents the contest between the worship of Jehovah, championed by Elijah, and the Baal worship which had grown popular in Israel through the influence of Jezebel, the queen. Do you infer from the narrative that the sympathies of Ahab were against the religion of Jehovah or merely neutral? Is it possible that the incidents of this chapter represent less a single event than a long campaign, in which Elijah and the prophets of Jehovah were attempting to overthrow idolatry, not only because of its evil effects on morals, but because they saw in it the collapse of Jehovah-worship? Do you regard

Elijah's treatment of the prophets of Baal as justifiable and wise? What does the demonstration of confidence in the prophet show as to the estimation in which he was really held by the people?

Twenty-eighth day.—§ 28. *The still, small voice:* I Kings, chap. 19. Read I Kings 19:1–14, and note that the great success achieved by Elijah at Carmel seems to have been lost through his overzeal in the slaughter of the prophets of Baal. Without that act of vengeance would Jezebel have been aroused to take revenge upon him? Does this indicate the strength of the queen's party? Is it not difficult to account for the terror and the flight of the man who had faced the king and the entire nation fearlessly? What was the meaning of the contrast between the wind, earthquake, and fire, and the still, small voice? Did it imply that prophecy ought to depend less on the sword and more upon the message of truth? Read vss. 15–21, and note the constructive prophetic program which they provide. They record also the first meeting of Elijah and his great servant and successor, Elisha.

Twenty-ninth day.—§ 29. *Elijah and Ahab:* I Kings, chap. 21. Read I Kings 21:1–29, and observe carefully its message regarding the responsibility of prophets like Elijah for popular justice. Elijah had become great as the champion of the national religion; now he appears as the defender of popular rights. Do you think that the will of a king could have been resisted in other ancient lands? What does the audacity of Elijah in rebuking the king for his unjust treatment of Naboth show concerning the working of a higher order of social justice in ancient Israel?

Thirtieth day.—§ 30. *Elisha and Jehu:* II Kings, chap. 9; 10:1–31. Read II Kings 9:1–37, and note that, after the close of Elijah's work, Elisha took his place as prophet and leader. He seems to have felt that the dynasty of Ahab offered no promise of better religion and morals in Israel, and that a new king was needed. Note the method by which he summons Jehu, a Hebrew captain, from the camp to take the kingship and stamp out the royal family and the evils of Baal-worship. Do you think the ferocity with which the prophet's program was carried out by the help of Jehu was wise and justifiable? Particularly read II Kings 10:1–31 as an example of ruthless and thoroughgoing religious reform. Can there be any doubt that the prophets of that time and the prophetic writers of later days, especially of I Kings 10:30, believed these bloody measures were entirely justifiable and necessary? How do you think they compare with the ethics of today? How do they accord with the teachings of Jesus?

Thirty-first day.—Review the titles of the readings for the previous days of this month. Note the fact that we have been dealing with the earliest periods of Hebrew prophecy, regarding which the written records are less complete than in the later ages. The prophets of these early times left no such ample rescripts

of their messages as did those of the great prophetic centuries which followed Consider also the tendency of any people to idealize the past and its heroes. May this habit affect in any way the traditions we have regarding the prophets whose work we have been studying? On the other hand, compare the high character of their teaching regarding God, the national relations to him, social justice, and personal responsibility, with the best ethical and religious teaching of contemporary peoples from 1500 to 800 B.C. In spite of the crudeness, limited views of the divine character and purpose, and drastic methods of accomplishing the ends they sought, do not these men reveal an exalted conception of religion and morality, which admirably prepared for the more adequate ministry of later prophets?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why is it necessary to study the Old Testament in order to understand Christianity?

2. Through what group of teachers did Israel receive religious inspiration and moral instruction?

3. What other elements influenced the growth and development of Israel's religion?

4. What portions of the Old Testament are attributable to the prophets?

5. Who were the Hebrews?

6. When and under what leadership does tradition record that they came to Palestine?

7. Under what circumstances did Egyptian influences come into their life?

8. How did Midianite influence contribute to their growth?

9. What do early Hebrew laws show to have been the ideals of the leaders concerning

   a) treatment of tenants?
   b) treatment of strangers?
   c) simplicity in worship?
   d) respect for parents and reverence for rulers?
   e) compensation for injuries?

10. What place did Moses hold in the political and religious history of the Hebrews?

11. Describe in a quoted sentence the religious and social conditions in Canaan in the days of the Judges.

12. Who were the "Judges" and what did they do as a class?

13. Name several things which the story of Samuel as a boy discloses concerning religious customs and beliefs in Israel at that time.

14. Describe the special work of Samuel as "judge."

15. What great religious truth did Samuel pronounce to Saul after his victory over the Amalekites?

16. What were the causes which led to social dissatisfaction in Solomon's reign?

17. What was the result of a continuance of his policy in the following reign?

18. What was the problem that confronted Elijah as a religious teacher?

19. Do you think that he dealt wisely with the situation?

20. Give a definition of the word "prophet" based upon your study of this month.

STUDY II

AMOS AND HIS IDEAL OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

The creative work of Moses made of the homeless and unorganized Hebrews a nation with the beginnings of self-consciousness and loyalty. Through the efforts of this great leader, Jehovah came to be accepted, theoretically at least, as their sole God, their protector, and the giver of their national institutions.

The occupation of Canaan, and still more the establishment of the monarchy in the age of Samuel and later, brought to reality the idea of national unity and power. Earlier tendencies to nature-worship long survived. Religious values were attached to places and objects inherited from former times, such as sacred stones, trees, and wells. Gifts were made to deity, in the form of blood offerings, and even human sacrifice was not unknown. Feasts were held in celebration of the important seasons of the year.

But along with these features of religious custom and practice shared with other peoples, Israel held to the belief in Jehovah, who had revealed himself to their fathers, delivered them from Egypt, guided them through the wilderness, and at last, in token of his continued interest, changed his own residence from Sinai to their new home in Canaan. The conception of a God who is just, who instructs his people by the events of history, punishing the evil and blessing the good, was fostered by the moral leaders who gave to Israel their first lessons in ethics and religion.

The local shrines were accepted as proper places of worship, and even images were tolerated as aids to popular religion. But we have seen how the invasion of Baalism, patronized by the court in the days of Ahab, roused the active and resolute opposition of the prophets of Jehovah, led by Elijah and Elisha.

The limitations of the Hebrew religion in this age lay in the idea of its restriction to Israel, to the present life, to the nation rather than the individual, and its tendency to rely upon ritual rather than moral interests.

A distinctly higher level of religious leadership is reached in the lives and ministries of Amos and his successors. They were men of the word rather than of militant action. They were writing prophets, as contrasted with their predecessors, because in addition to the spoken word they employed written messages in order to reach wider communities, and to serve as the basis of religious education.

Theirs was a wider outlook, for they perceived that the entire world, not Israel alone, is the sphere of Jehovah's authority. They emphasized the fact

that the divine selection of Israel was not for favor but for service, and imposed obligations which could not be met by national boasting or priestly rites. Above all, they insisted that Jehovah is ethically pure, and that he demands of his worshipers the same qualities which he himself possesses. These were new and vital elements in the development of Israel's morals and religion.

First day.—§ 31. *Superscription and text:* Amos 1:1; 7:14, 15; II Sam. 14:1, 2; Neh. 3:5, 27; II Kings 14:23–29; Isa. 5:25. Read Amos 1:1 and note that this verse introduces the prophet by occupation and native place. See further Amos 7:14, 15 for the prophet's own statement concerning himself. (For other references to Tekoa, see II Sam. 14:1, 2; Neh. 3:5, 27.) Read the story of the prosperous reign of Jeroboam II in II Kings 14: 23–29. Note that in Amos 1:1 an earthquake is referred to, perhaps the one mentioned in Isa. 5:25. Read vs. 2, which is really the text of all that Amos preached, his customary utterance, a warning of judgments to come.

Second day.—§ 32. *Israel's guilty neighbors:* Amos 1:3–8; 2:16; II Sam. 12: 26–31. Read Amos 1:3–8, and note that two of Israel's neighbors, Damascus and Gaza, the chief cities of Syria and Philistia, are threatened with destruction. Locate these places, and the others mentioned, on the map, and note the recurring expressions characteristic of these two paragraphs and of all the others down to 2:6. What was it for which the two nations were condemned? Had not the Hebrews formerly been guilty of deeds as savage? Read II Sam. 12:26–31 for an instance of this in David's life. Does not this show that a higher standard of conduct was demanded by Amos?

Third day.—§ 33. *Tyre and Edom:* Amos 1:9–12. Read the passage and note that the nations named are charged with the slave trade and deep-seated hatred of a brother tribe (Judah). Locate the places on the map. Observe that it is intimated that only a part of the sins that could be mentioned are named. Note also that the brutalities cited are such as the prophet believes any right-minded people ought to abhor.

Fourth day.—§ 34. *Ammon and Moab:* Read Amos 1:13–2:3 and note again the recurring phrases in which the oracles are given. What acts of savagery and sacrilege are charged in this case? Locate the places on the map. Observe that not one of these nations is accused of sinning against divine instruction, but only against the common laws of decency and humanity. See how in every oracle the world-wide authority of Jehovah is assumed.

Fifth day.—§ 35. *Judah's sin:* Amos 2:4, 5. Read and note that Judah completes the list of seven neighboring nations that are to suffer for their sins. Was it a good device for the prophet to secure attention by speaking first of the

surrounding people? Note that in the case of Judah at least three sins are mentioned. Are they of the ordinary crude and brutal sort? Or are they rather sins against divine instruction? The judgment thus comes closer to Israel.

Sixth day.—§ 36. *Israel denounced:* Amos 2:6–8; I Kings 12:26–30. Read and see how Amos at last brings home to his hearers on the streets of Bethel, one of the religious capitals of Israel (see I Kings 12:36–30), the evils which are bringing their prosperous state to ruin. Four sins are named: injustice, avarice, immorality, and drunkenness. Heathen nations are in danger because of the crude sins of a savage state. How much more may Israel expect to suffer, since she knows the will of God from her prophetic teachers.

Seventh day.—§ 37. *Amorite and Hebrew:* Amos 2:9–16; Deut. 1:6–8. Note that in this passage the prophet, speaking for God, says that the Amorites, a people much superior to Israel in civilization, who were sometimes spoken of, like the Canaanites, as the former possessors of Palestine (see Deut. 1:6–8), were driven out and destroyed to make room for Israel. What other providential assistance does Amos say that Jehovah has rendered his people? Yet how had they treated the prophets and holy men? Note the threat of national calamities in vss. 13–16.

Eighth day.—§ 38. *The prophet's commission:* Amos 3:1–8. Read and consider that in the prosperous times in which Amos was living the people were sure to regard the words of the prophet as those of an alarmist and to insist that the favor of Jehovah assured them immunity from danger. "No," says Amos. "The very fact that God has chosen you from among the nations is the reason he will expect from you a higher order of obedience." When they asked of Amos a reason for his rebukes, he boldly told them he could not refrain from preaching. God had spoken to him; he must utter his message. What light does this passage throw on the way in which Amos was led to undertake the task of a preacher? Is it not suggested that the moral conditions which he observed among the people of Northern Israel, where he came with his products to the market, aroused in his soul a sense of the divine call to speak the needed message of rebuke?

Ninth day.—§ 39. *The luxuries of Israel:* Amos 3:9–15. Read and note the picture Amos 3:9–15 presents of the wealth acquired by men who have not scrupled to exploit their fellow-citizens for their own advantage. Note that heathen places like Ashdod and Egypt are ironically summoned to see how some of the people of Israel can outdo them in the oppression of the poor. Consider the references to summer and winter houses, and houses ornamented with ivory, as signs of newly gotten wealth. How does this condition compare with that of our own age? Note the denunciation of the shrine at Bethel.

Tenth day.—§ 40. *The women of Samaria:* Amos 4:1–3; Isa. 3:16—4:1. Mark in the first passage the prophet's seemingly contemptuous reference to

the women of Israel as "cows of Bashan." For an interesting parallel, read Isaiah's denunciation of the women of Jerusalem in Isa. 3:16—4:1. Neither of these prophets was a woman-hater, offended by the folly of feminine fashions. But they both saw that womanhood in every nation sets the standard of morals. If women were content to enjoy luxuries secured by their husbands at the expense of social injustice, what promise was there of reform? What parallels do you find in present-day social conditions? What would you say of the responsibility of right-minded women in a social order like our own? What threat is uttered against these women of Samaria?

Eleventh day.—§ 41. *Useless sacrifices:* Amos 4:4, 5; I Sam. 15:22; Isa. 1:11–17; Jer. 7:22, 23; Hos. 6:6; Mic. 6:6–8; Amos 5:21–24. Notice how the prophet sarcastically summons his hearers to go to Bethel and Gilgal, two of the chief shrines of Northern Israel, and watch the useless and wearying process of sacrifices and ceremonial. He even declares that these external rites only "multiply transgressions," because they satisfy the consciences of the people. Read in the same connection, I Sam. 15:22; Isa. 1:11–17; Jer. 7:22, 23; Hos. 6:6; Mic. 6:6–8, and a further word of Amos himself, 5:21–24, as the words of the prophets regarding the folly of depending on outward rites as a means of securing the divine favor.

Twelfth day.—§ 42. *Warnings received:* Amos 4:6–11. Read the passage, and see how the prophet insists that God has not failed to send the people warnings. What calamities are mentioned as having fallen upon various parts of the land? Do you understand that these disasters have come in swift succession, or is the reference to events within memory that might be construed as divine warnings? What has been the result?

Thirteenth day.—§ 43. *The mysterious threat:* Amos 4:12, 13. Read the verses and note that something not named, but certain and threatening, is predicted, as the result of which Israel will be brought face to face with God. Remember that Amos preached in Bethel about 750 B.C., and that about 30 years later, in 721 B.C., the Northern Kingdom was overrun by the Assyrians, and many of the people carried away to the east. Is it likely that this is the danger spoken of? If so, how would Amos be able to forecast it? Read also vs. 12 for a splendid tribute to the creative power and world-wide rule of Jehovah.

Fourteenth day.—§ 44. *Idolatrous shrines:* Amos 5:1–9. Read Amos 5:1–3 and note that the overthrow of Israel is so surely anticipated as to be treated as already experienced. Observe that in vss. 4, 7, Beersheba far to the south is added to Bethel and Gilgal, and they are spoken of as shrines so given over to formal and idolatrous worship as to be avoided by the faithful. Locate these places on the map. Study the fine description of Jehovah's majesty in vss. 8, 9, and compare it with vs. 13, and 9:5, 6.

Fifteenth day.—§ 45. *The social sins of Israel:* Amos 5:10–15. Read and observe the frequent references to the "gate" of the city, as the open space in which business was transacted and courts were held. What kinds of injustice are mentioned in this paragraph? What forms of wealth and luxury does the prophet name? Note the people's claim that Jehovah is with them, and the prophet's dissent from that view. In spite of the prosperity of the period, what does Amos say of it? Can you restate the meaning of this passage, substituting modern law courts and twentieth-century conditions?

Sixteenth day.—§ 46. *The day of Jehovah:* Amos 5:16–20; 3:11; 4:12; 5:27; 6:1, 7. Read 5:16–20 and note the word "therefore." Read the other references and find in each case a summing up of the reasons for punishment, the result of the social sins mentioned. Note also the "woe" of vs. 18, and the later one in 6:1. The "day of Jehovah" meant, in the popular mind, the time when God would give his people complete victory over their enemies. The prophet affirms that it will be rather a time of chastisement for their sins. In their present evil condition, they should fear rather than wish it.

Seventeenth day.—§ 47. *Worthless ritual:* Amos 5:21–27. Observe in this passage the strong words in which Amos asserts Jehovah's disgust at the popular worship. Would you regard these words as literally true or as a strong statement of the prophetic protest against merely formal service? Of what acts of idolatry have the people been guilty? Can there be any doubt that in vs. 27 the prophet refers to the coming Assyrian invasion and deportation?

Eighteenth day.—§ 48. *The revels of political leaders:* Read Amos 6:1–6, in which the chief men of Samaria are denounced for the selfishness, heartlessness, and luxury of their behavior, while the victims of their injustice suffer and the welfare of the state is neglected. Their city is as wealthy and strong as the cities the prophet names in other lands. Yet they have no wish to use their large opportunity for wise government and enlightened leadership. Locate the cities named. Note that in vs. 1 the nobles of Zion (Jerusalem) are named with those of Samaria as lords of misrule. Note also the use of the name "Joseph" as the title of the Northern Kingdom. Contrast the picture of effeminacy and self-indulgence with the older simplicity of Israel's life. Note also the reference to David as traditionally associated with music. Is the prophet including all of Palestine in his picture of selfishness and of coming destruction?

Nineteenth day.—§ 49. *The coming terror:* Amos 6:7–14. The threats of approaching disaster reach their climax in this sixth chapter. Note the recurring "therefore." Jehovah is weary of the sins of his people; their wealth and selfishness are an affront to him. Observe the gruesome picture in vss. 9, 10, where pestilence is doing its terrible work, and no one dares mention the name of Jehovah for fear of incurring his further wrath. The crash is coming (vs. 11) like an

earthquake shock. Note the prophet's illustrations of attempting the impossible, in vs. 12. What impossibilities had Israel been attempting? What nation is to afflict the land? Locate the places mentioned and note that they are the extreme limits of Palestine.

Twentieth day.—§ 50. *Three visions:* Amos 7:1–9; Joel 1:1–12. Amos 7:1–9 contains graphic pictures of approaching trouble. (Read also Joel 1:1–12 for a description of a locust plague, not an unfamiliar visitation in Palestine.) Observe that it is the prophet's plea that averts the threatened destruction by locusts and fire. Read again vss. 7–9, and see that there is a deepening of the note of doom. The prophet is unable longer to stay the hand of judgment. Does it seem strange that in a time of such prosperity, under the popular rule of the strong and successful king, Jeroboam II, the words of Amos, the unknown farmer and preacher from Judah, should have seemed idle and foolish?

Twenty-first day.—§ 51. *Amos and Amaziah:* Amos 7:10–17. Read now the story of Amos' reception at Bethel; note the contrast between the prophet, a stranger, without friends or authority, and the powerful priest, the head of the group of ministers at the temple in which calf-worship instituted by the first Jeroboam was carried on, wearing the brilliant robes of his office, and irritated by the ominous words of the man from the south. Observe that the priest insinuates that Amos is only interested in getting a living out of his preaching and that he would do better to return to his own land to ply his trade (vss. 12, 13). Notice the resentment with which Amos denies the implied insult (vss. 14, 15), and his assertion that he does not belong to the group of professional prophets ("sons of the prophets") but is a plain herdsman and farmer, summoned of God to bear a message to Israel. In what manner do you understand God to have called Amos to this task? Note the severity of the prophet's threat against the priest and the nation. Why did not the king himself enforce the orders of his priest against Amos? or do you understand that Amos did obey and return to Tekoa?

Twenty-second day.—§ 52. *Vision and warning:* Amos 8:1–6. Is it possible that Amos returned to his home after the episode of 7:10–17, and there gathered the substance of his former messages into writing, and added these later sections? Is it probable that we owe the making of this collection of sermons or oracles to the prophet's desire to reach a wider audience with his message? Read Amos 8:1–6, and note that in vss. 1–3 there is given a fourth vision of the prophet, following the three in 7:1–9. Observe the obvious meaning of Amos that Samaria is ripe for the destruction which came only a few years later. In vss. 4–6, see how pointed is the rebuke to the traders who grudge the time required for religious service because they want to be busy at money-making. What dishonest practices are mentioned? How does this apply to some types of modern commercialism?

Twenty-third day.—§ 53. *Days of trouble ahead:* Amos 8:7–14. See with what sinister words the prophet predicts the distress that is to come upon the land, like the overflow of the Euphrates or the Nile. Read 8:7, 8. Observe the pictures of eclipse and public lamentation in vss. 9, 10. But note in vss. 11, 12, the fact that the worst calamity will not be the physical disaster that is to come, but the loss of that prophetic direction and counsel which now they despise. See how Amos refers to the leading shrines and their images as "the sin of Samaria," "thy god, O Dan," and "the Way of Beer-sheba."

Twenty-fourth day.—§ 54. *The shrine of sin:* Amos 9:1–4; I Kings 13:1–10; Isa. 5:14; 27:1. Read Amos 9:1–4, in which the prophet has a vision of the divine wrath upon the sanctuary and the altar, presumably at Bethel, where idolatrous rites have been celebrated. Pillars, capitals, and foundations are to be shattered. Read I Kings 13:1–10 for a story illustrating the hatred of the prophets for the sanctuary set up by Jeroboam at Bethel. Note that the prophet sees in his vision the total destruction of the devotees of the sinful worship. They can find no escape in heaven or in the abyss. The thick forests of Mount Carmel cannot conceal them. Even in the depths of the sea the great serpent shall find them. Read Isa. 5:14 and 27:1 for references to the mythological serpent or dragon of the deep.

Twenty-fifth day.—§ 55. *The God of the nations:* Amos 9:5–8; 4:13; 5:8, 9; 8:8. Read Amos 9:5–8 and note the majesty of the divine patron of Israel, already referred to in similar words in 4:13 and 5:8, 9. Note also in vs. 5, the recurrence of the words already met in 8:8. But particularly observe the claim that Jehovah as truly controls the destinies of other nations, like the Ethiopians, the Philistines, and the Syrians, as he does those of Israel. They who call themselves the people of Jehovah cannot escape the results of their misdeeds through any favoritism on his part. What was the basis of the claim of the Hebrews that they were "the chosen people of God"? Find on the map the nations and the localities referred to.

Twenty-sixth day.—§ 56. *Final words of hope:* Amos 9:9–15. Do you see in Amos 9:9–15 an entire change of tone? Is it possible that some other prophet, who felt that the messages of the book were too somber and hopeless, has added these final lines to lighten the picture, and open a door of hope? Would you even begin this section with the last clause of vs. 8? Contrast the promise of return from captivity with the constant note of destruction that has preceded. Observe the beautiful picture of returning prosperity and of permanent happiness. Did these predictions find fulfilment in the actual history of Israel? What is the condition of Israel today?

Twenty-seventh day.—*The Book of Amos.* Read once more the entire book and picture to yourself, as well as you are able, the way in which it took form.

It is evidently a series of public addresses, or is based upon them. Did Amos probably write them down in connection with their delivery or at a later time? May he have had disciples, as we know Isaiah had (see Isa. 8:16, 17) who set down the things he was accustomed to say? Is the literary style of the book impressive?

Twenty-eighth day.—The prophet Amos. Recall what we are told of Amos, his home, his occupation, the fact that he was not connected with the gild of prophets. Remember that though he lived in Judah, he went to Israel, across the border, to give his message. What does he say led him to begin preaching? In what part of the northern kingdom did he preach? Do you infer that he stayed there long? What do you suppose was the success of his work? What kind of a man do you think he was, as to age and disposition? How important a place would you give him among the prophets so far as you know them? In what manner does he illustrate the use which the Spirit of God makes of human lives?

Twenty-ninth day.—§ 57. *The times of Amos:* II Kings 14:23–29; 15:1–7. Read again the record of the reign of Jeroboam II in II Kings 14:23–29. His contemporary in Judah was Azariah (Uzziah). Read the account of his reign in II Kings 15:1–7. In both kingdoms, north and south, great prosperity prevailed. The people were passing from the simpler life of shepherds and farmers to the more complex and exciting opportunities of city life. Are such changes taking place today? The distance between the rich and poor was growing wider. Social injustice was more common. To what extent do these evils exist in our own times? Religion was identified with ritual services at the shrines where idol worship prevailed in the name of the ancestral faith, and where practices both luxurious and immoral were indulged. Priests and prophets were numerous, but few were concerned for the moral and spiritual life of the people.

Thirtieth day.—The message of Amos. The herdsman, who probably came to Bethel from Tekoa for purposes of trade, aroused by what he saw to express plainly his convictions, put himself on the side of the prophets of the past in rebuking the sins of the times. (Recall Elijah's conflict with Ahab.) He was sensitive to the social wrongs under which many of the people suffered. He insisted that Jehovah would bring corrupt and dishonest men to judgment. And when the people told him that they had no fear, since Jehovah was their national God, and would take care of their interests, he startled them by the new doctrine of God's universal rule, and his impartial vindication of righteousness. Amos was a foreign missionary, the first of the order. Read Matt. 3:1–12, and note that Amos was in some degree like John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of a selfish and pleasure-loving age the uselessness of ceremonial rites and of claims to national privilege, and the need of repentance. Yet Amos believed profoundly in the divine mission

of Israel, only he insisted that it brought responsibility and not license. His is consistently a message of divine righteousness, and judgment upon the sins that defeat the ends of social justice. Note particularly the advances in moral ideals, national and social, reached by Amos, over those of earlier prophets.

Thirty-first day.—The message of Amos for today. The value of these moral leaders of ancient Israel is the fact that they deal with the *ever-recurring* aspects of individual and social life. Never were the sermons of Amos more timely than today. Consider the social conditions of our times and find many parallels. Can you make a list of them? His rebuke of greed, dishonesty, self-indulgence, injustice, and misrule might be repeated with unfailing advantage in most communities. To enter into the spirit of these older teachers of the race, by careful study of their times and their messages, is to find in their counsels many principles which may be applied to the situation in our own time. They will thus become the means by which interpreters of the truth today may be used by the Spirit of God in reaching the life of the present age as were the prophets of Israel in lifting the ideals and influencing the acts of their countrymen.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Name some of the survivals of nature-worship which the early religion of Israel shows.
2. Name some of the popular shrines or places of public worship.
3. Give as many features of the worship at these shrines as you can.
4. Who were the reigning kings in Northern and Southern Israel when Amos was speaking at Bethel?
5. What were the political and social characteristics of those times?
6. What was the dominating principle of the religious life?
7. Tell all that you can of Amos personally previous to his appearance at Bethel.
8. Give the location of Israel's enemies—Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab, Damascus, and Gaza.
9. For what principal reason did Amos denounce these?
10. (*a*) What were his accusations against Israel's men of business? (*b*) against the women? (*c*) against the treatment of the poor and the laboring classes?
11. How did he answer Israel's plea that she was specially favored of God—exempt from his displeasure?
12. What did he say about the elaborate and painstaking worship of his times?
13. Why did he feel it *his* duty to reprove Israel?
14. How did Amos interpret Israel's past calamities?

15. How did he describe the Day of Jehovah?
16. Were the messages of Amos written or spoken?
17. What nation had Amos in mind when he predicted destruction for Israel?
18. Do we know what became of Amos?
19. Would you say that his message was of no avail?
20. If Amos were here in our midst today would he have reason to believe that the world had progressed beyond the need of his teaching regarding social justice and sincere and consistent religion?

STUDY III

HOSEA—A STUDY IN DOMESTIC MORALITY

An impressive idea of the importance of personality in the ministry of the prophets is afforded by the contrast between Amos and Hosea. The archaic view that prophetic instruction is mediated through men, irrespective of their individual character, habits, training, and experience, no longer meets the test of facts.

It would be quite impossible to imagine Amos as the author of one of the messages of Hosea. The two men were widely separated in their natural interests, their early surroundings, their personal experiences, and their moral and religious problems.

Amos was a Judean from Tekoa; Hosea was a man of Northern Israel. The former was a farmer; the latter, a man of the town. One was moved by religious convictions and indignant observation of half-heathen practices to denounce the injustice and the superficialism of the people of Bethel. The other, through the agony of a personal tragedy, was led to understand the dangers to family life to which Samaria, the northern capital city, was exposed, and the love of God which could forgive even the shameful national infidelity.

The times of Amos were the halcyon days of prosperity in the reign of Jeroboam II. The age of Hosea witnessed the swift descent of Israel to ruin under the kings who followed that monarch and who fell one after another in the confusion that prevailed.

Yet different as are the personal characteristics of these two men, they are rightly associated by the student of ethics and religion in Israel as closely joined in time, in loyalty to their ideals, and in heroic efforts to save the nation from the abyss into which it seemed destined to plunge. If their efforts proved unavailing to save the state, they were not without influence upon sensitive minds in their own age, in the early Christian church, and increasingly in the modern world.

First day.—§ 58. *Hosea and Gomer:* Hos. 1:1–5. Note that in 1:1 we have mention made of Hosea's father, of whom we know nothing else, and of the kings who reigned in Judah and Israel. Hosea's home was in Israel, yet the rulers of Judah are mentioned first. Why? Note that in vss. 2, 3 Hosea is said to have received the divine command to marry a woman of immoral life. Does it seem probable that this can be a statement of fact? Is the situation relieved by the supposition that Hosea mistakenly thought himself commissioned of God to take

this step, in order to teach the nation a lesson? Or does it seem more likely that he unwittingly married a woman of wayward nature, and that the tragedy that followed brought him to a consciousness of the evil of the age, and of his own duty to become an interpreter of God's will to the nation? Note particularly, in vs. 4, the contrast between the commendation pronounced upon Jehu by the prophets of his age (read II Kings 10:30 and then glance through 10:1–29) and the conviction of Hosea that the conduct of that king was unjustifiable, and that his dynasty would have still to atone for it.

Second day.—§ 59. *Hosea's children:* Hos. 1:6—2:1; Isa. 7:3; 8:3. Read the Hosea passage and note the prophetic use made in vss. 6, 8, 9 of the children's names (the phrase following each is its signification in the Hebrew). Similar use of names is made by another prophet, Isaiah. Read Isa. 7:3 and 8:3. Is there indication of growing domestic trouble in the names of the second and third children ("unpitied," "not of my people")? But notice also that by the time this record is written Hosea, now a prophet, has learned to use all his sad domestic experience as an illustration of the relations between Israel and Jehovah. Note also that 1:7 and 1:10—2:1 have a far different and much more sympathetic tone. Moreover, they seem to refer to Judah rather than Israel. It is generally thought that these verses were added by some later hand, in an adaptation of the message to the people of Judah.

Third day.—§ 60. *Israel the unfaithful wife:* Hos. 2:2–13. Note that this remarkable passage is throughout a message to the nation, yet it is put in the vivid terms suggested by the conduct of an unfaithful wife. Could the prophet have made his reproofs and warnings to Israel as effective in any other way? Consider the fact that the worship of Baals, the local divinities, and the gods of the other nations was not only infidelity to Jehovah, but that it usually included immoral practices, the indulgence in which broke down all ideals of domestic purity. Is this the reason why unfaithfulness to God begins to take the name "adultery" in the vocabulary of the prophets?

Fourth day.—§ 61. *The reclaiming of the nation:* Hos. 2:14–23. Read, and note that, in spite of all the unfaithfulness of the past, the prophet is not without hope that the nation will return to obedience. Are Hosea's love for his wife and hope for her reformation suggested strongly in these verses? Note the promise of permanence and material blessing in the new relationships hoped for. Why does the prophet want the people to cease to say Baali ("my lord")? Is it too suggestive of the worship of Baal?

Fifth day.—§ 62. *The repurchased wife:* Hos. 3:1–5. Read, and consider that the story of Hosea and Gomer is told only in fragments. The prophet was far more interested in his mission to Israel than he was in telling of his own sad experience. What had happened in the home? Is this the repetition of the account of Hosea's

original purchase of a slave-wife? Or is it his final effort in behalf of a woman whom he loved, but who had left his home for her lover, and had fallen to the lowest depths? In buying her back did he wish to give her protection from publicity and insult? Does there seem to be some hope of final redemption left in the heart of the prophet?

Sixth day.—§ 63. *Results of corrupt leadership:* Hos. 4:1–10. Read the passage slowly and carefully and note the vivid picture of social conditions in Northern Israel. What does Hosea name as the sins of the time? Mark the fact that he regards the priests and prophets as chiefly responsible for this condition. How could selfish and unspiritual ministers profit by the sins of the people they were supposed to teach? Notice how unchastity and adultery constantly recur in the prophet's arraignment. Was he more sensitive to such evils than to others?

Seventh day.—§ 64. *The downfall of domestic sanctity:* Hos. 4:11–19. Read this somber description of moral conditions and consider whether the prophet was not justified in denouncing the religious customs of the time as responsible for the overthrow of virtue. Is it probable that the scenes here described were not infrequent at the "high places" and in the "groves" where the rites of the half-heathen worship were celebrated? Note the words to Judah in vss. 15 and 17, and see how the people of the Southern Kingdom, probably at a later time, were warned against imitation of, or association with, Northern Israel.

Eighth day.—§ 65. *A decadent nation:* Hos. 5:1–7; Amos 7:10–17. Read the latter passage and recall the indignant words of Amos at Bethel, addressed to the priest Amaziah and to the house of the king. Read Hos. 5:1–7. On whom does Hosea say the responsibility rests for the sad decline in national efficiency? Was it not upon those in places of leadership, the priests and the king and his court? Notice the threat that their children, the most desirable of possessions, they shall lose, because they have borne them to other gods.

Ninth day.—§ 66. *Threats of coming disaster:* Hos. 5:8–15. Note the alarm which is sounded out from some of the high places of Israel. It is a time for alarm, but there is no strength for resistance. Egypt and Assyria were the two nations who might be thought of as helpers in a time of distress. But neither can help now, says the prophet. It is to Jehovah that Israel should look. But he is the very one they have most to fear.

Tenth day.—§ 67. *Plea and protest:* Hos. 6:1–6; Matt. 9:13. Read the Hosea passage and notice in vss. 1–3 the prophet's plaintive appeal to the people to seek safety in obedience to God's will. The times are full of peril. The state is tottering. Yet in spite of this, Jehovah can quickly bring days of prosperity again. Notice the figure of a wounded or sick person, speedily restored to health. Do you notice the different tone of vss. 4 f., as if the prophet felt a fresh wave of discouragement in view of the wavering, unstable disposition of the people? Note

the striking words of vs. 6. Jesus quoted these words with approval. See Matt. 9:13.

Eleventh day.—§ 68. *Deeds of blood:* Hos. 6:7–11; II Kings 15:8–31; 17:1–6. Read the Hosea passage and picture the situation described. Then read II Kings 15:8–31 and 17:1–6 for the record of these years. How many kings reigned over Israel in those few years? How many of them came to their end in violent ways? Are not Hosea's words justified? Note that vs. 11 is another of the Judean additions by a later hand.

Twelfth day.—§ 69. *The heat of revel and murder:* Hos. 7:1–7. Read, and notice the references to the work of the baker, as an illustration of the constantly heated atmosphere of intrigue and dissipation at the court. Read again the story of the final days of Israel in II Kings, chaps. 15 and 17, and decide what is meant by "the day of our king."

Thirteenth day.—§ 70. *Foolish calls for foreign help:* Hos. 7:8–16. Read, and notice, especially in vss. 8 and 11, the references to the wavering and unstable foreign policy of Israel, or Ephraim, as the prophet calls the nation. What two countries are named as the ones to which Israel alternately appeals for aid? It is this half-baked, ineffective procedure which is the chief example of weakness in the state. What signs of premature old age are mentioned? Note that the prophet denounces the nervous readiness of the officials to seek assistance in Egypt and Assyria, when the real source of national strength and safety is Jehovah.

Fourteenth day.—§ 71. *The anger of an insulted God:* Hos. 8:1–6. Read these verses and mark again the word of warning in view of coming danger. Notice that the claim that the people make that they know God, linked with unrighteous conduct, is an affront to Jehovah. They have given him no share in their politics or their social life. See with what contempt Hosea speaks of their conception of God in the phrases "thy calf" and "the calf of Samaria." Contrast the apparent indifference of Amos to the idolatrous worship of the age with the hot anger and scornful contempt of Hosea for it. Do you think the latter's experience accounts for this?

Fifteenth day.—§ 72. *Reaping the whirlwind:* Hos. 8:7–14. Recall the fact that gods whose worship was imitated at the shrines of Israel were supposed to give fertility to fields and vineyards; but Hosea points out the failure of crops and the growing distress of the nation as a proof of the futility of the popular Baal religion. Note also that the very efforts made to secure the favor of strong nations like Assyria only add to the burdens of tribute without bringing relief. Observe the reference to the ceremonial offices of religion, and the prophet's insistence that they are useless. Do you notice the references to Judah in vs. 14 and a certain resemblance to Amos, especially such passages as Amos 1:4, 7, 10, etc.?

Sixteenth day.—§ 73. *Coming days of trouble:* Hos. 9:1–6. Read, and note the fact that Hosea is confident that either Egypt or Assyria is to be the dreaded

instrument of Israel's chastisement; but he is not sure as yet which of these two nations it is to be. Yet events soon proved Assyria to be the destroyer. The threat of the days of exile soon to come is the burden of these verses. What elements of the ritual are here mentioned?

Seventeenth day.—§ 74. *The prophet rejected:* Hos. 9:7–10; Judg., chap. 19; Num. 25:1–5. Observe as you read from Hosea the prophet's indignant allusion to the popular antagonism to himself and his message. Does he imply that his life was actually put in jeopardy? Read Judg., chap. 19, as the record of an outrage now recalled by current events. Also read Num. 25:1–5 for the references to Baal-Peor. What is the inference drawn by the prophet in his references to these ancient sins of the nation?

Eighteenth day.—§ 75. *A childless people:* Hos. 9:11–17; Ezek., chap. 27. Recall in the reading of the verses from Hosea that the most ardent desire of the Hebrew family was for children, and the greatest misfortune was childlessness. Yet that is the fate that shall befall Israel. Read Ezek., chap. 27, for a description of the riches and beauty of Tyre. Locate it and Gilgal on the map.

Nineteenth day.—§ 76. *Shrines destroyed and the king cut off:* Hos. 10:1–9; 7:5; 10:15; II Kings 5:10, 14, 25, 30. Read in Hosea and consider the references to the popular symbols of religion, the altars and obelisks or "pillars," which with the trees, graves, or "stakes" were the significant objects at the shrines or "high places." Note the references to the violent death of the king in vss. 3 and 7 of the Hosea passage, and compare them with 7:5; 10:15, and II Kings 15:10, 14, 25, and 30, the murders of Zechariah by Shallum, of Shallum by Menahem, of Pekahiah by Pekah, and of Pekah by Hoshea. Notice the contemptuous references to Bethel ("house of God") as Beth-aven ("house of folly"). Again see the references to Gibeah, the scene of ancient iniquity.

Twentieth day.—§ 77. *The coming of the foe:* Hos. 10:10–15; 7:8; 7:11; 10:1; 11:1. Read 10:10–15 and note the certainty of the trouble to come upon the land. Some well-known event is referred to in vs. 14, but the allusion is uncertain. Note the reference to Ephraim, or Israel, as a heifer; and compare this with other representations used by the prophet for the nation; e.g., a cake in 7:8, a dove in 7:11, a vine in 10:1, a child in 11:1, etc. What agricultural figures are used in these verses? What was their value?

Twenty-first day.—§ 78. *The tender love of God:* Hos. 11:1–4. Note the references to Israel as a son. How did the prophet represent the nation in chaps. 1–3? What event is referred to in vs. 1? What had been the divine attitude toward Israel in all the past, as asserted by Hosea? To what is the figure of a child changed in vs. 4? Read Matt. 2:15, and note the writer's use of Hosea's reference to the Exodus as an event which in a measure was repeated or "fulfilled" when Jesus came out of Egypt.

Twenty-second day.—§ 79. *The yearning of Jehovah:* Hos. 11:5–11. Notice the fresh threats of disaster in vss. 5–7. The danger from Assyrian invasion was drawing nearer. Mark the sudden change from the tone of severity in vss. 5–7 to one of wistful tenderness in vs. 8, which is much like 6:4 in its mood. Read Gen. 14:2 and note with what other cities of the plain Admah and Zeboim are usually associated. Does the entire contrast of attitude in vss. 9–11 indicate the possibility of their being a later addition?

Twenty-third day.—§ 80. *Wavering Israel's chance for repentance:* Hos. 11:12—12:6; 7:8–11; 8:9; 9:3; Gen. 25:26; 32:22–32. Read Hos. 11:12—12:6, and notice how frequently the prophet recurs to the weak and nervous foreign policy of the nation, never quite sure where it ought to look for help. Compare 7:8–11; 8:9; 9:3. Read Gen. 25:26 for the story of the birth of Jacob; Gen. 32:22–32 for that of his wrestling, and Gen. 28:10–22 for the narrative of Jacob's dream at Bethel. What is the bearing of these references to Jacob's dealings with God upon the attitude of the children of Jacob in Hosea's day?

Twenty-fourth day.—§ 81. *Altars multiplied; prophets ignored:* Hos. 12:7–14; Amos 2:10–12; Gen., chaps. 29 ff. Read Hos. 12:7–14 carefully and reflect upon the constant ministry of the prophets through the generations since the birth of the nation. Yet in spite of this fact, what does Hosea say of the present conduct of the people? Read Amos 2:10–12 for a comment on the popular disinclination to heed prophetic counsel. On the other hand, was there any lack of altars for the ordinary and heathenized worship? How does the prophet describe their numbers? Read Gen., chaps. 29 ff., for the story of Jacob's service in the land of Haran. What do we infer, from Hosea's use of this story, concerning his hope for Israel?

Twenty-fifth day.—§ 82. *The offended God:* Hos. 13:1–11. Note the reference to Ephraim's ancient position as the leading tribe of Israel, and the moral contrast in the days of the prophet. The worship of Baal was the beginning of evil, and now even Jehovah is worshiped with as corrupt a cultus as that of Baal. What references are made to religious practices? What ancient blessings are recalled? What is God's present attitude toward the nation? What is said of the fate of king and judges?

Twenty-sixth day.—§ 83. *God will not repent; the end has come:* Hos. 13:12–16; I Cor. 15:55. Read the Hosea passage carefully, and note that this is the severest of all the messages of Hosea. The prophet insists that the account is closed, and the doom of the nation is sealed. Observe that the opening clauses of vs. 14 are questions and imply a negative answer: "Shall I ransom? . . . . Shall I redeem?" No, nothing remains but for Sheol and death to bring forth their plagues and their destruction. God will no longer repent of his fixed purpose. Read I Cor. 15:55, and observe that the apostle uses the passage with exactly the reverse meaning.

Twenty-seventh day.—§ 84. *Concluding words of comfort:* Hos. 14:1–9. Read, and note that these verses are in direct contrast to the preceding section. Notice that chap. 14 seems to be a colloquy in which the prophet, speaking for God, and the nation hold a conversation. What is the divine mood in these verses? What is now the disposition of the people? Note the mutual promises spoken and the prophet's closing words of admonition.

Twenty-eighth day.—The Book of Hosea. Review the entire book, and note that it falls into two natural divisions: chaps. 1–3, which give the introduction regarding Hosea's experience, and chaps. 4–14, which record the sermons Hosea preached. The first part probably deals with events which occurred in the reign of Jeroboam II; the second describes conditions in the days of disaster which followed. The book is characterized by the vibrant, rapidly changing qualities of the prophet's own emotions. Do you find it as interesting as Amos? Is it more difficult to understand?

Twenty-ninth day.—The man Hosea. Note that, with the exception of the references to Hosea's marriage and children, we know almost nothing about him—far less than about Amos. Do you think that the story of his unhappy home life accounts in a satisfactory manner for the nature of his messages to the people? Have you studied the face and attitude of Hosea in Sargent's painting, "The Prophets," and, if so, do you think the figure is true to the book? What would you imagine to have been Hosea's age and disposition? Do you imagine he was an effective public speaker?

Thirtieth day.—The message of Hosea. Consider once more the vividness with which Hosea pictures the social and political conditions of his day. Recall the record of his stormy age in II Kings, chaps. 15 and 17, and think how necessary was the presence of some interpreter of God's will in such a time. What are the sins which he insistently rebukes? Do you think Hosea believed his work as a prophet was successful? Do you think it was? What bearing had his own domestic tragedy upon his message? Would it be true to say that the influence of Hosea is plainly seen in the work of later prophets, especially Jeremiah and Ezekiel? Do you think Hosea's sensitiveness to the moral character of manhood and womanhood in his day lifted the tone of life in Judah, even after Israel had perished?

Thirty-first day.—The message of Hosea for today. Does it not seem to you that in the times in which we live people need to ponder the lesson which Hosea tried to teach? While it is not true that religious rites encourage immoral conduct as in the prophet's day, are there not other features of modern life which have just this tendency? Do you think this is the effect of some of the amusements and fashions of our time? What would you say of easy divorce and its results? Is the social evil promoted by such factors in so-called good society? Are there, on the other hand, notable forces at work for the purification of society, the warning of youth against sexual dangers, and the strengthening of the home upon the foundations of purity and love?

Would you give the experience and the message of Hosea a place among the forces that have aided in this moral uplift? Have you noticed in the study of the book the prophet's frequent references to incapable or irresponsible leadership? Do you think there is any more vital problem of public life than that of men and women wise, trained, and efficient for leadership, recognizing their responsibility to the people and to God? Would you apply the same principle to nations like China, and the warring peoples of Europe?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. When and in what places did Hosea live?
2. Describe the political conditions which surrounded him.
3. What was the moral atmosphere of his times?
4. What was the attitude of Israel toward Jehovah?
5. How did the people regard other gods?
6. Give briefly the story of Hosea's domestic experience.
7. How did his experience pass over into his interpretation of the relation of Israel to Jehovah?
8. Why was the sort of life and ideals current in Israel at this time likely to destroy family life?
9. Upon whom does Hosea place the responsibility for the misfortunes of his people?
10. Do you think that spiritual decay has anything to do with political decay in nations?
11. Can there be national decay which is not preceded by the weakness of individuals?
12. How many kings ruled over Israel in its period of decadence, how did they generally come into power, and what was the average length of their reign?
13. What two nations were threatening Israel at this time?
14. By what name does Hosea call Israel?
15. Give some of the figures which Hosea uses to describe Israel.
16. Give some of Hosea's arguments to show that disaster is the result of abandoning Jehovah.
17. What, according to Hosea, is to be the fate of Israel?
18. Compare Amos and Hosea (*a*) with respect to personal characteristics, (*b*) with respect to their conception of God, (*c*) with respect to the final purport of the message of each.
19. Give a list of things accepted in our modern world which have a tendency to break down moral standards, especially those of the family.
20. What relation have these things to our attitude toward God?

STUDY IV

ISAIAH AND THE PROBLEMS OF THE CITY

We have seen that the earlier prophets, including Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, Amos, and Hosea, performed their work in the Northern Kingdom. From the days of Isaiah onward history and prophecy alike were confined to the South, for Samaria came to an end as a political power while Isaiah was in the full tide of his early career as a preacher.

Isaiah was the most conspicuous and influential of the moral leaders of Israel. His ministry covered nearly half a century. His position in the society of Jerusalem was assured, apparently, both by birth and by personal advantages. He was the possessor of great natural gifts as a speaker and had the sagacity of a statesman and student of public affairs.

We are fortunate in having at hand the historical background of his career in the Second Book of Kings, for his long ministry covered a period of vital interest in the political experiences of Israel and Judah. Certain features are added by the narrative contained in Second Chronicles.

The outstanding problem of Israel's political life during the ministry of Isaiah was the gradual advance of Assyria toward the west. In 740 B.C. the cities of Hamath and Arpad on the far northeastern frontier of Syria were taken. In 732 Damascus was conquered. In 721 Samaria fell. In 711 Ashdod and the Philistine confederacy were reduced, and in 701 Sennacherib plundered Judah and reached the gates of Jerusalem. It was this menace which Isaiah used so effectively in warning Judah of her sin and impending calamity.

The Book of Isaiah is one of the most voluminous of the prophetic works, and has a larger number of chapters than any other. For that reason it stands at the head of the list. But there are excellent reasons for the belief that writings other than those of Isaiah have found their way into this volume, and have their best explanation in connection with other periods and activities than those of this prophet. For this reason only those portions of the book which are generally recognized as Isaiah's are included in the present study.

Furthermore, it is quite evident that even the authentic material of the book is not arranged in chronological order. For the purpose, then, of facilitating the work of the student, the various portions of the book which give clearest evidence of being the utterances of Isaiah are set in the order of their origin as nearly as

that can be determined. Regarding other portions of the book, something will be said in the closing paragraphs of this study, and in later studies.

The value of the Book of Isaiah lies not in its size, nor in the importance of the position of the prophet in the political and social life of his time. Rather is it found in the greatness of the ideas presented, and their significance for the age in which Isaiah lived, for the later centuries of his people, and for the history of ethics and religion throughout the world.

First day.—§ 85. *The call of Isaiah:* Isa. 6:1–13; II Kings 15:1–7; II Chron. chap. 26. Read Isa. 6:1–13 and note the fact that it is quite clearly the record of the prophet's call to his ministry, and therefore the events of which it speaks must have occurred before he undertook any prophetic work. Now read II Kings 15:1–7, which describes the reign of King Azariah, who died in 739 B.C. Compare this with II Chron., chap. 26, and notice that the same king is called Uzziah, as in Isa. 6:1. Also note the wealth and success of the king. What was his one misfortune? What does the Chronicler say was the reason for it? Notice the words of Isa. 6:9, 10 and consider whether it seems probable that God sent Isaiah really to harden the hearts of the people; or did he rather wish to prepare him for their indifference? Read Matt. 13:14, 15 and John 12:40 and note the use made of this passage by Jesus and the Fourth Evangelist. Observe also that the chief elements of the vision were the holiness of Jehovah, and the certainty of impending danger for Judah.

Second day.—§ 86. *Dream and reality:* Isa. 2:1–11; Mic. 4:1–3; II Kings 15:32–38; chap. 16; II Chron., chaps. 27, 28. Read Isa. 2:1–11 and note that vs. 1 is an editorial introduction, mentioning the father of Isaiah (not to be confused with Amos the prophet). Now read Mic. 4:1–3 and notice that it is identical with Isa. 2:2–4. As Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah he may have copied this passage, or both prophets may have borrowed the words of an earlier prophet, or the passage may have been inserted later in both records. In any event, the passage presents an ideal picture of world-wide interest in Jerusalem and Jehovah which is very far from being realized, as the prophet shows in vss. 5–11. Observe in vss. 5–8 the results of the successful reign of Uzziah. What are the features of Jerusalem's life which Isaiah condemns most severely? What does he predict as soon to happen? The entire section from 2:2 to 4:6 is a sermon delivered by the prophet sometime during the early part of his ministry, probably in the reign of Jotham or in that of Ahaz. (Read II Kings 15:32–38 and II Chron., chap. 27, for the story of the reign of Jotham, and II Kings, chap. 16, and II Chron., chap. 28, for the reign of Ahaz.) Of this sermon, the passage relating to the exalted mountain seems to be the text.

Third day.—§ 87. *Judgments on nature and man:* Isa. 2:12—3:15; a portion of the sermon noted yesterday. Read the text and the indictment of Judah given in vss. 2–11; the punishments which are to fall as a result are next recited. Note that in vss. 12–21 the threat is made that destruction is to come upon nature and the works in which men take pride. This "day of Jehovah," the time when he will judge his people for their sins, is *soon* to come. What will suffer most? Now read 2:22—3:15 and note that the second object on which calamity is to fall is man. Who are to be taken away? Who will be left to rule? Note the features of this picture of anarchy, possibly a forecast or a description of the weak and irresolute reign of Ahaz, the son of Jotham. Do vss. 10, 11 sound like a weaker and later insertion? Note throughout these paragraphs that it is bad leadership which is bringing the nation to ruin. One is reminded of the stern rebukes of Amos and Hosea, caused by similar conditions in Samaria.

Fourth day.—§ 88. *The women and the future:* Isa. 3:16—4:6. Read vss. 16, 17 and note the doom that in the earlier portion of the discourse was pronounced upon nature and works of man and upon men, as the supposed leaders of the state, is now described as about to fall upon the women of Judah, because of their pride and ostentation. Compare this passage with Amos 4:1–3 and observe that both prophets saw that the women of the age were responsible in no small degree for the social abuses and injustices which prevailed. Note the picture of a siege and the consequences in 3:24—4:1. Now read 4:2–6 and mark the total contrast in tone. This sermon in chaps. 2–4 illustrates Isaiah's constant emphasis upon four points: Judah has sinned; she is to suffer as a result of Assyrian invasion; a remnant is to be left, purified by the experience; and the future shall be glorious.

Fifth day.—§ 89. *The unfruitful vineyard:* Isa. 5:1–24. This section and the one that follows constitute apparently another sermon of the prophet's. The text is the "song of the vineyard" (see vss. 1, 2). Who is the owner of the vineyard, and who are represented by the vineyard itself? Read again the six "woes" of vss. 8–23 and note that monopoly, drunkenness, presumptuous and cynical perversity, pride, and injustice are the bad fruits produced by this "vineyard" of Israel. Observe the graphic picture of the insatiable Sheol which is swallowing down the glory of the careless and proud nation. Compare these denunciations with those of Amos 6:1–6 regarding similar sins. Note also the power of Isaiah as a preacher of righteousness, as illustrated in this sermon.

Sixth day.—§ 90. *The stretched-out hand:* Isa. 5:25, 26–30; 9:8—10:4. Read Isa. 5:25 and note that it seems to refer to a recent earthquake (cf. Amos 1:1) as a sign of divine wrath; but further, note that other calamities are to be expected from God, for his anger is not yet appeased, and "his hand is stretched out still." Now read 9:8—10:4 and notice that four times the same refrain

occurs in these verses, which fact seems to imply a dislocation of this section from its original place after 5:25. See how the prophet refers in vss. 8–12 to recent disasters in the Northern Kingdom, which are not taken seriously by the people. Who were the Syrians and the Philistines? A still more terrible danger approaches —Assyria. Note in 9:13—10:4 the denunciation of unfaithful leaders, the description of anarchy and civil war as prevalent, and the social injustice that is rife—city problems which Isaiah strove to solve. Note the vivid character of the passage, and the recurrence of the ominous refrain. Now read 5:26–30, and see that it describes the terrifying approach of the dreaded enemy that is to bring the merited punishment.

Seventh day.—§ 91. *The prophet and the king:* Isa. 7:1–9; II Kings 16:1–20. Read Isa. 7:1, 2 and note that Ahaz, son of Jotham, is king of Judah, and that he is in trouble because his two neighbors, Israel and Syria, are planning to make war upon him, probably to compel him to join with them against Assyria. Now read II Kings 16:1–9 for further information about this king and his difficulties with Pekah and Rezin. These events occurred about 735 or 734 B.C. Read vss. 3–9 and mark the reference to Isaiah's son, Shear-jashub, a name which means "the remnant shall return," and seems to refer to the saving of a part of the people when the Assyrian disaster comes. Notice that apparently the king was trying to safeguard the water supply of Jerusalem in the event of his being attacked. The prophet tries to persuade him not to fear his two foes, for they are sure to fall soon before the advance of Assyria, while Judah may escape, protected as she is by her isolation and difficult approaches. Perhaps the sixty-five years is a later insertion, or a general prediction. In reality the two northern kingdoms fell much sooner. Isaiah feared that Ahaz might try to secure help from the Assyrian king, the very source from which all evils might be expected. Note the prophet's counsel of non-interference, and trust in God. If he had been heeded, this crisis might have been passed safely. But Ahaz was weak and wavering. Read II Kings 16:7–20 for the account of what he actually did.

Eighth day.—§ 92. *The sign of the child Immanuel:* Isa. 7:10–25; II Kings 16:5–9. Read Isa. 7:10–12 and note that the prophet was evidently unsatisfied with the interview of vss. 1–9. Read II Kings 16:5–9 and see that the king had no doubt already sent off his messengers with a present to Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, asking for help. Would not this seem to have been an act of folly? So Ahaz refused to commit himself and declined to ask a sign of Isaiah. Now read vss. 13–17 and see how in anger the prophet insists on giving the king a sign—the early birth of a child whose mother, a "young woman" (the word does not necessarily signify a virgin), in the distress brought on by the invasion of the land, shall name him Immanuel, "God be with us." Notice that the child is to be fed on famine fare, and that before he is beyond the age of childhood both the

northern kings shall be swept away. Read vss. 18–25, four brief pictures of the invasion by Assyria and the distress that shall ensue.

Ninth day.—§ 93. *The mighty river:* Isa. 8:1–18. Read vss. 1–4 and note that in two different ways Isaiah illustrated the fact of the coming invasion by the Assyrians, first by writing on a signboard in a public place in Jerusalem the curious words which meant, "haste-booty; speed-prey," and secondly by giving that name to his second child. See how near the danger has come, for the child will be only two or three years old when Damascus and Samaria shall be plundered (vs. 4). How soon were these predictions realized? Read vss. 5–8 and notice the prophet's reference to the softly flowing waters that replenished the Pool of Siloam as the symbol of the divine help. Forgetting this, and thinking only of the present peril, the King invites the overflowing flood of Assyria, which shall cover the land of the child Immanuel, "God help us." Now read vss. 9, 10, with their references to the futility of any efforts against Jerusalem, for "God is with us." In vss. 11–15 the prophet refers to his difficulty in making the people understand his message, and in vss. 16–18, to his determination to turn from the unheeding crowd to the quiet circle of his disciples, to whom he will intrust the later interpretation of his message.

Tenth day.—§ 94. *The Prince of Peace.* Isa. 8:19—9:7. Read vss. 19–22 and note the signs of popular relapse into spiritism and other magic arts in the time of distress, and the prophet's insistence that it will be in vain. See now the contrast with this depression in the joy of deliverance which is soon to be realized (9:1). Notice the prophet's reference to the coming joy as if he were looking back upon the unhappy present from the glorious future. Probably tidings had just reached Jerusalem of ravages by the Assyrians in the north. In perfect confidence he predicts the happiness which shall follow the overthrow of the invader. Read vss. 2–5 and observe that Isaiah is so confident of the future deliverance that he uses the past forms of speech to make it more emphatic. What are the two events which give most joy, as described in vs. 3? Now read vss. 6, 7 and note that a royal child is to be born who shall be the cause of victory and blessing to the nation. Like Tiglath-Pileser he shall be a wonderful counselor or planner; a mighty, or divine, hero; a distributor of spoil (literally a "father of spoil"); but, unlike the Assyrian, he shall be the Prince of Peace. Such was the confident expectation of the prophet. Were his words fulfilled?

Eleventh day.—§ 95. *Damascus and Israel:* Isa. 17:1–11; II Kings 16:1–9. Read Isa. 17:1–3 and note that the words of this section were evidently written shortly before the fall of Damascus in 732 B.C., and that Ephraim, or Israel, is mentioned also as soon to suffer. Read in II Kings 16:1–9 the reference to the capture of Damascus by Tiglath-Pileser in 732 B.C. Read now vss. 4–11 and see how the fate of Northern Israel is made emphatic in these verses. Notice Isaiah's

name for God in vs. 7. Would you connect that title with the vision of Isa., chap. 6? What is it that is bringing doom upon Israel?

Twelfth day.—§ 96. *The fate of Samaria:* Isa. 28:1–13; II Kings 17:1–6, 24. Read the Isaiah passage and note that it is a description of the drunkenness and profligacy of Samaria in the period just before her fall in 721 B.C. Notice the references to Samaria's wealth and fertility; her ripeness for attack; the wilfulness and debauchery of her leaders, and their impatience of prophetic instruction. Do you think their arrogant words in vs. 9 refer to Isaiah or to one of their own prophets, like Amos or Hosea? They say they are weary of the prophet's monotonous reproofs; but they are destined to be taught by men of still harsher speech, the dreaded Assyrians. Read II Kings 17:1–6, 24 for the story of the fall of Samaria in 721 B.C. The words of the prophets had come true. The kingdom of Israel, founded by Jeroboam I in 937 B.C., thus came to an end.

Thirteenth day.—§ 97. *The fall of Ashdod:* Isa. 20:1–6; II Kings 18:1–8. Read the Isaiah passage, and note that it records Isaiah's earnest effort to prevent his king and his people from making an alliance with Egypt, the hereditary foe of Assyria. Read II Kings 18:1–8 for the record of the first years of Hezekiah, who reigned from 715 to 686 B.C. Hezekiah had inherited the Assyrian vassalage from his father Ahaz. It was Egypt's policy to inspire revolt against her rival and alliance with herself on the part of smaller states, like Judah and Philistia. Note that, as a protest against such a policy, Isaiah went about for three years barefoot and half stripped (the garb of a captive), as a symbol of the fate which would befall Jerusalem if it should revolt from Assyria. Mark the fact that in the reign of Ahaz, Isaiah protested against the folly of asking Assyria for help. Now he insists that the alliance once made shall be kept. The reference to Ethiopia and Egypt together is due to the fact that an Ethiopian line of rulers reigned in Egypt at the time. Look up on the map the places mentioned.

Fourteenth day.—§ 98. *The stricken land:* Isa. 1:1–17; II Kings 18:3. Read Isa. 1:1 and note that it is the editorial statement regarding the author and the time in which he wrought as prophet; compare the similar statement in 2:1. Read vss. 2–9 and notice that the country is in the throes of invasion and disaster. It seems probable that the situation is that of 701 B.C. when Sennacherib the Assyrian king devastated Judah (cf. II Kings 18:13). What are the difficulties referred to by Isaiah, and what does he regard as the causes? Now read vss. 10–17 and see how strong are the prophet's words regarding the uselessness of ceremonial religious services, in which the people trusted to win the favor of God. Isaiah's message must have seemed heretical to a people so confident of their religious rectitude. Note especially the appeal to the people for genuine repentance, and the correction of social abuses which have lost them the divine favor and protection. Is it probable that this tone of rebuke throughout the chapter was the

cause of its being placed at the opening of the book? Observe that the strictures upon the character of Jerusalem are the result of the prophet's deep love for the city.

Fifteenth day.—§ 99. *The redemption of Zion:* Isa. 1:18–31. Read vss. 19–20 and note that they are a part of the general indictment of Jerusalem for its careless indifference to God, which is the theme of chap. 1. Observe in vss. 21–23 the severe arraignment of Jerusalem. What are the sins charged against the public leaders? Read vss. 24–31 and note that the prophet's thought advances to the days beyond the Assyrian terror, when discipline shall have done its work, and the remnant that is left shall be purified and blessed. The closing lines revert to the sinners and their destruction. Would it not seem that in a time of national humiliation like this, with an enemy like the Assyrians advancing from town to town toward the capital, the people would respond to the prophet's call to national repentance?

Sixteenth day.—§ 100. *The coming siege:* Isa. 29:1–15. Read vss. 1–4 and notice that Isaiah predicts that as the year comes around, Ariel, i.e., Jerusalem, will be besieged and brought down into the dust. But in vss. 5–8 expression is given to his confidence that the Assyrian host shall be dispersed like chaff. Remember that Isaiah's four doctrines are: Jerusalem has sinned; she shall be punished by an Assyrian invasion; she shall not be destroyed, but a part of her people shall survive, and her enemies shall be driven away; afterward shall come the time of happiness and prosperity. Read vss. 9–15, keeping in mind Isaiah's love for Jerusalem, and his desire to save the city if possible. But what can be done with a people so lukewarm and indifferent? No one seems to know what to do; and meantime the danger is increasing. Isaiah saw that terrible trouble was ahead, but did not doubt that in some manner God would save his city.

Seventeenth day.—§ 101. *The folly of relying on Egyptian aid and the downfall of the Assyrian:* Isa. 30:1–17. Read the passage and remember that Egypt sought constantly to secure alliances with the states of Syria, and to incite them against Assyria. Now that the Assyrians were actually menacing Jerusalem there was a strong party in the city that insisted on seeking the promised aid of Egypt. Against this policy Isaiah used all his force of sarcasm and persuasion. Notice in vss. 1–5 the reference to the Hebrew princes at Egyptian cities as ambassadors, and in vss. 6 f. the picture of the long desert journey to Egypt, a country that Isaiah contemptuously calls the indolent, vain land. Notice that vs. 15 expresses Isaiah's policy of quietness and trust in God.

Eighteenth day.—Isa. 30:27–33. Read this fine passage and note the confidence with which the prophet speaks of the power of Jehovah, the return of prosperity to Jerusalem, and the tragic destruction of the Assyrian, for whom a place of burning is prepared from of old.

Nineteenth day.—§ 102. *Jehovah versus Egypt:* Isa. 31:1–9. Read the passage and notice that the theme is the same as in the previous section—the folly of trusting to the help of Egypt. Note, however, the prophet's confidence that in the approaching crisis Jehovah shall protect Jerusalem, and the Assyrian enemy shall be destroyed.

Twentieth day.—§ 103. *Just rule and happiness:* Isa. 32:1–20 (3:16—4:1; Amos 4:1–3). Read the Isaiah passage and note that in vss. 1–8 there is the picture of righteous rulers and a happy people when things shall be called by their real names, and a deeper wisdom shall mark the conduct of men. This age is to follow the days of trouble. Read vss. 9–20, with their denunciation of women, recalling 3:16—4:1, and Amos 4:1–3. Days of deep humiliation are before them, but after chastisement has done its work there shall come the age of peace.

Twenty-first day.—§ 104. *The Assyrian is the instrument of God:* Isa. 10:5–34. Read vss. 5–11 and note the fact that the prophet, speaking for God, says that Assyria is but the rod in the hands of Jehovah, though he does not know it. To him all cities are alike, but the divine purpose shall be accomplished. Read vss. 12–19 and see how God proposes to humble this proud destroyer as soon as he has finished the appointed work. In vss. 20–23 the "remnant" is spoken of, the survivors of the time of trial. This is a favorite idea of the prophet's of which his older son, Shear-jashub, was the living symbol. In vss. 24–27 the people are encouraged not to fear the Assyrian, who shall perish like Midian of old (see Judg. 7:19–25). Read the striking passage in vss. 28–32, one of the most graphic in the book, descriptive of the approach of the Assyrian army to Jerusalem. But all in vain, for Jehovah shall frustrate his purpose, and his host shall be like a fallen forest. Consider the strength of Isaiah's confidence that permitted him to use such strong words with the enemy coming daily nearer.

Twenty-second day.—§ 105. *The glorious future:* Isa. 11:1—12:6. Read these verses, which belong with the previous section, and mark the glowing words of the prophet regarding the age of peace which is to come. He seems to expect it, does he not, soon after the overthrow of the Assyrian foe? The ideal ruler is to be from the line of David, the "stock of Jesse." Note that the scattered Hebrews, probably the dispeised Israelites of Samaria, and all exiles from the land, are to be brought back. The nation is to be reunited and victorious over all of its neighbors. Then follows (12:1–6) the song of the happy nation. Was the hope here expressed ever realized? Can it ever be? In what manner are those words capable of realization? Are the ideals expressed practicable for the world? Have any of them come to application in civic and national affairs?

Twenty-third day.—§ 106. *Smitten foes:* Isa. 14:24–27; 17:12–14; 18:1–7. Read these fragments and note that they all refer to the impending fate of the

Assyrian army, which, in some unknown but certain manner, is to be overthrown. Notice that in the last passage reference is made to an embassy from the Ethiopian rulers of Egypt, probably offering an alliance and assistance to Judah. Isaiah, in the name of God, declines all outside help and asserts that Jehovah is soon to make such an end of their invaders that it will take months for the beasts and birds of prey to devour them. This is the mark of his confidence in the protection of God.

Twenty-fourth day.—§ 107. *The humbled city:* Isa. 36:1–22. Note that this and the following chapter are taken from II Kings, chaps. 18, 19. Read the account there. To all appearance Jerusalem had no hope of escape. The Assyrian, so long predicted by Isaiah, was actually at the doors. Note the contemptuous references to the help of Egypt, and the boastful offer of horses. Hezekiah had brought all this disaster upon himself by revolting against Assyria in the pride of his heart, and probably with the constant encouragement of the Egyptian party. Now things are at their very worst, and there is no help in sight.

Twenty-fifth day.—§ 108. *The great deliverance:* Isa. 37:1–38. Read vss. 1–35 and observe the calm behavior of Isaiah in the face of this terrible trouble, and his confident assurance that Jerusalem would be saved and the Assyrians dispersed. What do you think was the secret of Isaiah's confidence? Did he feel that Jerusalem was so necessary to the divine purpose that it was sure to be saved in some manner? Read the outcome in vss. 36–38. While the Assyrian inscriptions say nothing of the destruction of their army, they imply failure by omitting any mention of the capture of Jerusalem. Thus Isaiah's recorded work ends in a glorious vindication of his lifelong predictions and his devotion to the city and to God.

Twenty-sixth day.—The times of Isaiah: II Kings, chaps. 15–19. Read again these chapters, and recall the fact that Isaiah's ministry extended from the final year of Azariah (Uzziah) to the middle of the reign of Hezekiah, and perhaps farther. Of these kings the first was able and prosperous, and Jotham, his son, followed his policies and inherited his success. The third of them, Ahaz, reacted violently against the prophetic program and adopted heathen customs. Hezekiah re-established the religion of Jehovah on firm foundations, probably under the advice of Isaiah, and removed many of the provincial sanctuaries whose effects upon public life were evil. The leading external feature of the period was the gradual approach of Assyria, before which Damascus fell in 732 B.C. and Samaria ten years later. Ahaz submitted to Tiglath-Pileser and obligated Judah to pay a heavy tribute. Hezekiah, against the counsel of Isaiah, threw off this obligation, and suffered the consequences in the disastrous invasion of Sennacherib, which, however, left Jerusalem intact.

Twenty-seventh day.—The man Isaiah. At an early age, perhaps about twenty-five, Isaiah, a prosperous and well-educated man of Jerusalem, began his

career as prophet. He was married, and had one son. Later a second son was born. He regarded himself and his children as "signs and wonders," illustrations of his great themes. For more than forty years, from the year of King Uzziah's death in 739 B.C. till the deliverance of Jerusalem in 701 B.C., Isaiah preached that calamity was coming upon Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem as the result of their neglect of justice, righteousness, and true religion. Recall his four great ideas—the sin of the nation, its impending suffering at the hands of Assyria, the survival of a remnant, and the happy future. What proofs have we had of Isaiah's power as a statesman and public speaker? Would you say that he was successful in his efforts? Would you say that he was the greatest of the prophets?

Twenty-eighth day.—The Book of Isaiah. Observe that the book contains sixty-six chapters, but that in our treatment of it we have used only about half of this material. Recall the statement in the introductory paragraphs that other writings than those of this prophet seem to have attached themselves to his authentic work. Notable among these are such sections as 13:1—14:23, and other oracles against the nations; chaps. 24–27, 34, 35, 40–55, and 56–66. Some of these sections will be treated in later studies. Note also the irregular manner in which the material is arranged in the book, and the reasons that have led to rearrangement by biblical students. But most of all, try to appreciate the greatness of the work and the attractiveness of much of its literary style.

Twenty-ninth day.—The message of Isaiah. Recall the preaching of this great moral leader of Judah, and remember that he was essentially a city man, and was keenly sensitive to the evils of the capital. He preached against drunkenness, and monopoly, skepticism, pride, vanity, especially as noted in the foreign fashions of the ladies of Jerusalem, wrong-headed leadership, and all sorts of injustice to the poor and the dependent. As a statesman he insisted first upon the isolation of Judah; but when once Ahaz had made the unfortunate alliance with Assyria, Isaiah demanded that the agreement be kept. In practically every message he delivered he made clear his four cardinal truths—sin, judgment, survival, and future glory. Remarkable is his love of contrast. When the days were prosperous, he preached that calamity was near. But when darkness had settled over the city, his words were full of hope. And in both, he was true to the ideals of prophecy.

Thirtieth day.—The predictions of Isaiah. Like other great prophets, Isaiah drew his material from the past, the present, and the future. In the latter field he showed remarkable foresight as a profound student of events, and an interpreter of the purposes of God. Recall his predictions of the speedy downfall of the kingdoms of Syria and Israel (7:5–17; 8:1–4), and their fulfilment. Also remember his confident statements about the distress to which Jerusalem would be reduced, and her final deliverance. Perhaps the most significant of Isaiah's predictions

related to the messianic time of peace and glory after the Assyrian had been overthrown. Of these the most vivid is that regarding the Child Wonderful (9:6, 7) whom Isaiah expected as the redeemer of his land from the foreign foe. That hope was realized, though not in the manner the prophet expected. The New Testament quotations from Isaiah laid hold of his words without particular reference to their original application, and related them wherever possible to the life of Jesus (see Matt. 1:22, 23; 4:12–16; Mark 7:6, 7; John 12:40). Thus the words were "fulfilled," not as predictions, but as coming to new birth and meaning in the life of the Master.

Thirty-first day.—The modern value of Isaiah. The moral awakening of the world in our day is due in no small degree to the rediscovery of the prophets of Israel; and among those whose messages have been found timely and convincing Isaiah holds a chief place. The city is the great social problem of our age, and Isaiah is the Old Testament specialist on that theme. The sins of the city, its volatile and vibrant life, its superficiality, its opulence, and its pride, all find place in his thought and speech. Our modern city problems are more complex than were those of his time, for iniquity, which was then largely individual, is today organized and exploited for profit. But the eternal principles which Isaiah applied to the evils of his day are the principles for our age and for all time, for they are the basic truths revealed by the Holy One of Israel.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What great nation menaced the political life of Israel and brought about the crisis which the writings of Isaiah reflect?
2. Describe the vision of Isaiah through which he felt himself called to be a prophet.
3. What can you say about the arrangement of the chapters in the Book of Isaiah and the reason why our work at this time is confined to the first 39 chapters?
4. What kings successively reigned in Judah during Isaiah's lifetime?
5. What social conditions did Isaiah face?
6. What place had the worship of idols in Isaiah's time?
7. Describe the plan by which Ahaz hoped to defeat the northern kings?
8. Give a clear statement of the prophet's threat in 7:10–25.
9. What was the actual fate of Samaria?
10. Give some instances of the symbolic acts by which Isaiah sought to convey his message.
11. In what words does Isaiah describe the real deliverance of Israel?
12. By what name does Isaiah continually speak of God?
13. What was the plan of alliance which troubled Hezekiah and compelled him to vacillate?

14. How strong a man was Hezekiah?

15. Describe the Assyrian invasion under Sennacherib.

16. What counsel did Isaiah give in the crisis?

17. How did he regard the Assyrian army, and why was he so confident that Jerusalem would be spared?

18. Give some characteristics of his addresses during this period.

19. How was Isaiah justified in the final outcome?

20. What passage from this portion of the Book of Isaiah do you think gives us today the most inspiration and enjoyment? Why?

STUDY V

MICAH AND THE RURAL CONDITIONS OF HIS DAY

In passing from the study of Isaiah to Micah, his contemporary, one goes from the city to the country: from the busy streets of Jerusalem to the more quiet regions of the westward slopes of Palestine; from the problems of world-politics to the activities of provincial towns, disturbed only by the passing of caravans or the chance hazards of plundering at the hands of the stragglers of marching armies on the way to Egypt or the North; from the vices and luxury of the capital to the petty tyrannies of country landlords over a helpless rural population.

Yet Micah's world was not contracted, in spite of the fact that his interests were those of the countryside. He had been in Jerusalem and was familiar with its intrigues and its superficiality. He knew something of the dangers in which the nervous and vacillating conduct of public affairs was involving the entire country, especially in view of Assyrian activities in the coast lands of Syria. Moreover, his outlook as a resident of the shephelah was upon that very plain of the sea along which commerce and war were constantly pushing men from all the lands. Past his town of Moresheth-Gath went the armies of Sargon and Sennacherib; and only a short distance away was Lachish, the gateway to Egypt, through which the embassies from the court of Hezekiah to the empire of the South, so satirized by Isaiah, made their way.

Contemporaries, and in a measure colleagues, were Micah and Isaiah, though in almost all regards unlike. Like Paul, Isaiah was a city man in all his associations and interests; like Jesus, Micah belonged to the country, and in his language its life is reflected. Isaiah's vision of Jerusalem's future was confident and optimistic. The city would pass through great dangers, but escape. Micah, however, looked farther into the future, even though the scope of his interests was not so wide. He discerned with clear eyes the approaching tragedy of the city's overthrow; but he did not doubt that out of the fiery trial that was to come there would emerge deliverance and redemption for the people of God.

These prophets share the feeling of intense concern regarding the moral and religious conditions of their day, and though neither alludes to the other, the combined results of their labors must have been notable at the time, even as their words have served to awaken ethical and spiritual concern in all the centuries since.

First day.—§109. *The coming of God:* Mic. 1:1–4, 14; I Sam. 5:6–8; 6:17; Isa. 1:1; Hos. 1:1; Ps. 18:6–15; Jud. 5:4, 5; Hab. 3:8–15. Read Mic. 1:1, and note that it is the editorial superscription of the book. Compare the word "Morashtite," which is used to describe Micah, with the reference to Moresheth-Gath in vs. 14, and observe that they seem to refer to a town that was near the former Philistine city of Gath (see I Sam. 5:6–8; 6:17). Read also Isa. 1:1 and Hos. 1:1, and notice that the three prophets were contemporaries, although probably not for the length of time the superscriptions would imply. Read Mic. 1:2–4, and note that Jehovah is angry, and is about to come down from heaven in his wrath against Samaria and Jerusalem, and that nature will be in terror at his approach. Read Ps. 18:6–15 for a similar picture of the terrible coming of God, and Jud. 5:4, 5 and Hab. 3:8–15 for other poetical descriptions of the consternation of nature and man at his coming in judgment. How would you interpret these passages?

Second day.—§110. *The sins of Israel:* Mic. 1:5–9; II Kings, chaps. 15–18. Read the Micah passage, and note that it gives the cause of the wrath of God described in vss. 2–4. Read II Kings, chaps. 15–18, for the evil course of Samaria (Israel) under the six kings from Zechariah to Hoshea, and for the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah, and note the frequent references to the military operations of the kings of Assyria in Palestine. Note the prophet's prediction of the destruction of Samaria, the city responsible for the moral conditions in Israel. Recall the statements of Hosea regarding the intimate connection between idolatry and the immoral life. The trouble that is to overwhelm Samaria, or perhaps has already befallen her, will reach even to Jerusalem.

Third day.—§ 111. *Stricken towns:* Mic. 1:10–16; Isa. 10:28–32; I Sam. 22:1, 2. Read the Micah passage. It includes a list of towns that seem to have been in the region in which the prophet lived, and were therefore familiar to him. On all of them trouble was to fall soon, probably because they lay in the path of the advancing Assyrians. The text is not very certain in this passage, probably because there were puns or plays upon the names of the towns in the prophet's original oracle. The references to Lachish as the gateway toward Egypt, the first stage on the sinful way to that land, and to Moresheth-Gath (Micah's home) as about to be lost to the enemy, are the clearest. Compare this picture of the stricken towns of the shephelah with Isaiah's reference to a wholly different route of the Assyrian approach in Isa. 10:28–32. For the story of David's refuge at Adullam, see I Sam. 22:1, 2.

Fourth day.—§ 112. *The oppression of the poor:* Mic. 2:1–5. Read and note the prophet's vehement indignation against the rich men who acquire large holdings of land, and then mistreat their tenants and dependents. Would Micah's position as a countryman, probably a farmer, make him especially sympathetic with the afflicted people of his own class? Do you suppose these landlords

lived on their property or resided in the city, and left the management of their estates in the hands of stewards and employees? Which would be worse for the farmers? Observe that the prophet, speaking for God, insists that the divine vengeance is soon to fall, and that the enemy that dispossesses the rich landowners of their property will mock them with taunts.

Fifth day.—§ 113. *The reproach of preaching:* Mic. 2:6–11; Amos 2:12; 5:10; 7:10–12; Isa. 28:9, 10. Read the passage from Micah and note that the rich and conscienceless men whom the prophet denounces are indignant at his words, and order him to keep silence, saying that his reproaches never cease. For similar experiences by Amos and Isaiah, read Amos 2:12; 5:10; 7:;10–12 Isa. 28:9, 10. The rich and oppressive sinners appeal to the traditional belief that Jehovah will be the protector of his people, and no one need fear the words of a fanatic like Micah. But the prophet insists that his words are wholesome and needed, and recounts further instances of mistreatment of women and children. Note the threat of exile, the command to depart in vs. 10, and the reference in vs. 11 to the sort of preaching they would like.

Sixth day.—§ 114. *The future of Israel:* Mic. 2:12, 13. Observe the wholly different situation of these two verses. They seem to belong to a much later age and another hand. In what manner they came into this connection it is hard to understand. Note that the writer speaks of Israel as a scattered people, who are about to be reassembled like a dispersed flock. They are to be gathered in such a multitude that the noise will be heard afar. Resistless, with Jehovah as king at their head, they march through gates of opposition, and nothing can stay them. These words evidently describe the prophetic hopes of the exilic or post-exilic age for the restoration of Israel to national life.

Seventh day.—§ 115. *Cruel officials:* Mic. 3:1–4. This is a vivid picture of the heartless treatment of the common people by the officials and the wealthy class. Picture to yourself what acts of violence and outrage lie behind these tremendously moving verses. Do you think Micah refers to the conduct of the leaders at Jerusalem toward the men of the small towns around him or to that of local officials and magnates in the towns themselves in relation to their poorer fellow-townsmen? Do you know of other instances in history of selfish and oppressive treatment of the dependent classes? Do you know of instances in which revolts have broken out among the peasants and serfs against their rulers and spoilers? Note the threat in vs. 4 that the scales shall be turned, and the men who have exploited the helpless shall receive their just deserts.

Eighth day.—§ 116. *Blind seers:* Mic. 3:5–8; Jer. 14:14. In the first passage, note Micah's denunciation of the false prophets of his day, the men who preach merely for reward, and have no interest in religion except as a means of making a living. Read Jer. 14:14 for an example of this sort of prophecy. No doubt these arraignments of their less competent contemporaries by the great

prophets were severe, and not wholly deserved. Would you liken them to the condemnation of preachers often uttered by evangelists today? Where does the truth probably lie? Note in vs. 8 Micah's strong and confident assertion regarding his own clear vision and prophetic power.

Ninth day.—§ 117. *Crimes that bring ruin:* Mic. 3:9–12; Jer. 26:1–19. Read and note Micah's return to his theme of bad leadership which is bringing the nation to destruction. Can there be any doubt that in this passage he is addressing the leaders at Jerusalem? What do you think he means by "building up Zion with blood"? How many sorts of leaders are mentioned? What charge is made against each class? What did they at the same time profess? What would be your opinion of those who profess religious belief but live immoral lives? Notice how Micah denounces judges, priests, and prophets alike for using their holy offices to make money. Would the same charge hold good today? Notice that in vs. 12 Micah boldly predicts the fall of Jerusalem, which Isaiah always insisted could not fall. Why this difference of view? Which prophet was right? Read. Jer. 26:1–19 for an interesting reference to Micah and to the oracle of Mic. 3:12 in the days of Jeremiah. Would not this imply that Micah was in danger as the result of his bold preaching?

Tenth day.—§ 118. *Israel the leader of the nations:* Mic. 4:1–5; Isa. 2:2–4. Read the two sections and compare them, noting that they are practically identical. Do you think that one prophet quoted from the other? If so, which is the original? Or is it probable that both quoted from an earlier oracle? Or may the passage have been inserted in both books by a later hand? Note that the picture presented is that of a world centering about Jerusalem and resorting to it for religious instruction; that Jehovah shall be the world-arbiter of all disputes; and that all weapons of war shall give place to the implements of peace. How does this picture compare with that of 3:12? Do you understand that vs. 5 recognizes the reality of the gods of the nations around? How does the sentiment of this verse compare with that of vss. 1–4? Has the prediction of vss. 1–4 ever been fulfilled? Do you think it will be?

Eleventh day.—§ 119. *Exile and return:* Mic. 4:6–10. Note that in this passage the situation appears to be that of the immediate pre-exilic years. In vss. 9, 10 Jerusalem is in deep distress, leaderless, and about to fall; her people are to be carried out and brought to Babylon; but there they are to be saved from their enemies. In vss. 6–8 (perhaps dislocated from their true position) the people are to be assembled once more in Zion, where God will reign over them and the former kingship shall return to Jerusalem, "the tower of the flock." This would seem to be a prediction of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., and the later return of her people to rebuild the city. Is it the work of Micah or of a later prophet? Why?

Twelfth day.—§ 120. *Israel to thresh its foes:* Mic. 4:11–5:1. Here is a still different situation. Now Jerusalem is besieged by a world in arms. But the purposes of the besiegers are vain, for Jehovah has only gathered them as sheaves to be threshed by the might of Israel. With horn of iron and hoofs of brass the daughter of Zion, pictured as a fierce creature of the field, shall be invincible. The insults of heathen nations against the worthies of Israel shall be avenged.

Thirteenth day.—§ 121. *The ruler from Bethlehem:* Mic. 5:2–4; Matt. 2:1–8. Read the Micah text, and note that a hero is expected, who shall come of an ancient clan, and spring from Bethlehem; that is, he shall be of David's family. The date of the utterance seems to be a time when no king is ruling, therefore after the beginning of the Exile. Meantime Jehovah leaves his people unprotected until the mother, probably thought of as Israel the nation, brings forth the messianic king. When he comes he shall shepherd the flock of God, and his greatness shall reach to the ends of the earth. Read Matt. 2:1–8, and notice that the Jewish people of Jesus' day interpreted this passage as referring to the birth of the Messiah.

Fourteenth day.—§ 122. *Leadership and victory:* Mic. 5:5–9. Notice the fact that the word "man" in the first line of this passage is in italics, which means that it is not in the Hebrew text. The passage is not connected with what immediately precedes and makes no reference to a Messiah, but affirms that when the time of danger comes, and the Assyrian invades the land, this shall be the peace or safety of the nation, that they shall be able to raise up sufficient leaders—seven or eight if need be—to repel the invader and even punish him in his own land. In that time to come, those who are left of Israel shall be beneficent as dew to the suffering and terrible as a lion to the hostile.

Fifteenth day.—§ 123. *Destruction of armaments and idolatries:* Mic. 5:10–15. Read and notice the divine prediction that military equipment, forts and cities, the symbols of political and warlike strength, are to be destroyed; and with them the superstitions, charlatans, and idolatrous objects which have corrupted the land. But notice also that, in spite of the loss of what men usually rely on to safeguard a country, the assurance is given that the divine vengeance shall fall on the nations that have been Israel's enemies. Would you conclude that the writer of this passage regarded armaments as equally displeasing to God with the symbols and relics of idolatry? Would you regard these verses as a good text for anti-militarist teaching?

Sixteenth day.—§ 124. *Witnesses from the past:* Mic. 6:1–5; Ex. 15:1–21; Num., chaps. 22–24; Josh., chaps. 3, 4. Read the Micah passage, and note that the prophet is summoning Israel into court, with the mountains and hills as witnesses. The nation is not charged with specific offenses, but it is implied that Jehovah is seeking to learn the cause of her unfaithfulness. Notice the references

to the past history of Israel, as the proof of God's constant but unrequited protection and love. Read Ex. 15:1–21 for mention of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam; Num., chaps. 22–24, for the story of Balak and Balaam, and the divine frustration of the curse against Israel. Read Josh., chaps. 3, 4, for the story of the crossing of the Jordan, from Shittim to Gilgal.

Seventeenth day.—§ 125. *What Jehovah requires:* Mic. 6:6–8; Matt. 22:34–40; Jas. 1:27. Read the Micah section, and notice that the theme is the character of true religion. It is one of the noblest utterances in the Old Testament. A questioner asks how he is to prove acceptable to God. Popular religion in his time was largely conceived in terms of offerings made and rites performed. It was costly and elaborate, but powerless to develop character or interpret the nature of God. What did the questioner think he might offer to God that would be pleasing? Is it possible that a spiritual religion could make profitable use of offerings of slaughtered animals, or quantities of oil, or human sacrifice? Yet the Old Testament shows that men did make such sacrifices, and thought them acceptable to God. What is the prophet's answer to the questioner? Read Matt. 22:34–40 and Jas. 1:27 for similar New Testament ideals. Would you say that in the items here mentioned lies the essence of religion?

Eighteenth day.—§ 126. *Sins of the rich:* Mic. 6:9–12. Notice that this passage is a denunciation of the common practices of cleverness and cheating which are the curse and disgrace of any community. What are the three forms of dishonesty that are mentioned? In what regard would it be easier to employ fraudulent weights and measures in ancient times, or in the Orient, than in lands like our own? What was the character of the rich men? And in what respect did the other classes copy their practices?

Nineteenth day.—§ 127. *The statutes of Omri:* Mic. 6:13–16; I Kings 16:21–28; 16:29—22:4. Note in reading the Micah passage that the foregoing conditions, whatever be the date of the utterance, were bringing divine judgment upon the community. The words might apply to many different periods of Israel's life. What threats are made? What industries are mentioned? Read I Kings 16:21–28 for the record of the reign of Omri, and I Kings 16:29—22:4 for that of Ahab, and observe that the prophet refers with stern disapproval to the character of Omri and his son Ahab, not so much in reference to special laws or "statutes" enacted, but in condemnation of the manners and morals of Samaria under their rule. Whatever community is being addressed (is it Jerusalem?) is threatened with a fate like that which had befallen Northern Israel. Do you think the same principles apply today? Would you say that a city or country that prospers by clever practices and dishonest business invites ruin at last?

Twentieth day.—§ 128. *Lament of the poor:* Mic. 7:1–6; Matt. 10:35, 36. Read the passage in Micah, and note that whether or not it comes from the same

period as the two previous sections it reflects a similar state of affairs. Perhaps Zion is the speaker, mourning over the degeneracy of the times. The ruling class is conscienceless and oppressive and judges are servile and corrupt. No one can be trusted, even the most intimate members of one's family. Read Matt. 10:35, 36 for Jesus' use of this passage in a different connection.

Twenty-first day.—§ 129. *Waiting for better days:* Mic. 7:7–10. Note that, like several others in the book, this passage seems to be unrelated to its context. The time is difficult; evil is ascendent. There is no present comfort. The only hope is in God and the future. Past sins are being expiated in the sufferings of the present. But God will not forget his people, and in his own time will vindicate his own good name by restoring them to happiness and punishing their enemies.

Twenty-second day.—§ 130. *Rebuilding the nation:* Mic. 7:11–13. Read the text, and notice the obvious situation. Jerusalem, now in ruins, is to be rebuilt, and her people, now widely scattered east and west, in Assyria and Egypt, are to be restored to their home-land. From the ends of the earth the returning Hebrews shall come, while the heathen world shall be desolated because of its sins.

Twenty-third day.—§ 131. *The compassionate God:* Mic. 7:14–20. Read the passage, and consider its appeal to God to restore the ancient prosperity of Israel, so that once more the land of Palestine may be occupied to its full limits. It is hoped that the wonders of the Exodus from Egypt may again be seen. The writer hopes for the time when his people shall hold the place of power in all the earth, and other nations shall submit to Israel and its God. Notice the play upon the word Micah ("who is like thee?") in vs. 18. The ancient favor of God to Abraham and Jacob is the ground of this closing appeal. Were these hopes ever realized?

Twenty-fourth day.—The Book of Micah. Glance through the entire book, and notice that it divides itself into three clearly distinct portions, chaps. 1–3, chaps. 4, 5, and chaps. 6, 7. Of these, the first (with the probable exception of 2:12, 13) is clearly the work of Micah of Moresheth-Gath, the contemporary of Isaiah. Regarding the other two sections it is difficult to speak with confidence either as to date or as to authorship. Several of the sections, as we have seen, appear to come from later periods, such as the Exile and the times that followed. Was it not probable that the authentic writings of a prophet as well known and impressive as Micah would attract to themselves other material which seemed related in spirit to the prophet's work? Do you think the matter of authorship and literary credit was considered of importance in the age of Micah? Is a portion of Scripture of greater value because it can be proved to be the work of a particular writer? Does not all writing of the sort rest in the last issue upon its own value and urgency? If one hesitates to concede that such fine passages as 5:2–4 and 6:6–8 came from any other hand than Micah's, must he not recall the

fact that considerable portions of the Old Testament, as, for instance, Job, Kings, Chronicles, Ruth, etc., are anonymous?

Twenty-fifth day.—The times of Micah. Recall Mic. 1:1 and the names of the three kings of Judah of whom Micah is said to have been the contemporary. Now read again II Kings 15:32—19:37 for the biblical record of that period, both in Northern Israel and in Judah. The fact that Micah speaks of the dangers threatening Samaria makes it possible that his work may have begun before 721 B.C., the date of the overthrow of the northern kingdom by the Assyrians. The revolt of the cities of the Philistine plain against Assyria brought an expedition of Sargon in 711 B.C., which also involved Judah. But the time of greatest danger and disaster was in 701 B.C., when Sennacherib made his devastating campaign in Judah, and all but took Jerusalem. The enormous booty which the Assyrians carried away at that time proved that Judah was wealthy, and the pictures given by Micah and Isaiah show that the usual social abuses bred by a period of prosperity prevailed both in the city and in the provincial districts. This is the political and social background of the message of our prophet.

Twenty-sixth day.—The man Micah. Recall Mic. 1:1, 14, and that the prophet is called the Morashtite, which probably means that he lived at Moresheth-Gath, a town near the former Philistine city of Gath. Read also Jer. 26:1–19, and recall that a century later, in the days of King Jehoakim, during the ministry of Jeremiah, certain friends of that prophet made a plea for his life, basing it upon the bold preaching of Micah in the reign of Hezekiah. This, as well as the contents of chaps. 1–3, shows that he was a fearless man of God—a dweller in one of the country districts of Palestine, on the western slope toward the Mediterranean; that he deeply sympathized with the oppressed peasant class in Judah, of which he was doubtless a member; and that he felt himself called of God to denounce the rapacity, cruelty, and selfishness of the ruling and wealthy group in Jerusalem and Judah. Compare Micah with other reformers of whom you know. Do you suppose his work was effective, and that improvement resulted from his preaching? Is it possible that he uttered many messages of which the book gives no record?

Twenty-seventh day.—The social ideals of Micah. Re-read Mic. 2:1–3, 9; 3:1–4, 9–12, etc., and recall the character of the times, and the indignation of the prophet at what he saw about him. Covetousness and monopoly were the order of the day among the men who had power to take advantage of their poorer neighbors. Isaiah saw that the same conditions prevailed in Jerusalem (see Isa. 5:8). The rapid growth of the northern and southern kingdoms under the prosperous rule of Jeroboam II and Azariah (Uzziah) gave opportunity for the amassing of fortunes hitherto unknown. With this came an increasing unscrupulousness on the part of the men who did not propose to let any moral considerations stand in the way of their success. Women and children, as well as men, were the victims

of these unjust conditions. And above all, the leaders of the state—princes, officials, judges—were responsible, because they not only tolerated the evils denounced, but shared in them. Do you think the present age offers striking paralels to the situation in Israel? Do you think there is the same need of prophetic rebuke and warning as in Micah's day?

Twenty-eighth day.—The religious teachings of Micah. Re-read Mic. 1:2–16, and recall the prophet's conception of a world-ruling God, who is sensitive to injustice, and roused to anger by the oppression of the poor. The fact that Jehovah's land is exhibiting outrageous examples of social unrighteousness is the ground for the expectation of divine chastisement at the hands of the approaching foe. As Isaiah called Jehovah the Holy One of Israel, and insisted upon his ethical character, so Micah feels that the worship of God cannot be divorced from a spirit of social solicitude. This is the very essence of religion. Whether it is Micah or another who speaks in the great oracle of 6:6–8, its truth and universality are at once recognized. Religion cannot consist in rites and ceremonies. Offerings of flesh or oil or even of life cannot compensate for unsocial conduct. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

Twenty-ninth day.—Micah's message to our age. It is of little value to study the times and utterances of the great moral leaders of Israel, or any other people, unless they offer some suggestion for ethical and religious improvement today. The prophets were not mere seers, looking into the future and uttering predictive oracles. They were men of their own age, seriously concerned with its social and religious conditions and the remedies that should be applied. For this very reason their words are stimulating and disciplinary. Humanity repeats its experiences, in spite of the evolution of social theory and structure. The messages of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah are of the greatest value in the study of modern social conditions and defects. Especially is the problem of morality and religion in rural communities made vivid by the words of our prophet. The moral dangers of small towns as compared with those of cities, the tendency to isolation and indifference to ethical reforms in rural communities, strangely coupled with a stronger moral sense, the difficulty of sustaining church life in the country, and at the same time the intense rivalry of denominationalism in small places, are among the newer phases of the problem with which Micah grappled.

Thirtieth day.—The messianic hope in Micah. In the portion of the Book of Micah (chaps. 1–3) regarding which it is possible to speak with confidence as the work of that prophet, there is nothing that suggests messianic expectations, for the reason that Micah was so seriously concerned with the social and religious abuses of his own time. But in other portions of the book the future hope of the nation is made clear. Read 4:1–5 for an example (also used in Isa. 2:2–4) of

expectation of a time when Israel shall be the leader of the nations, Jehovah the arbiter of world disputes, and peace shall cover the earth. In the spirit of that hope several other oracles have been included in the volume. But for the most vivid of its messianic utterances read 5:2–4, and note that in the future time of distress a ruler shall arise from Bethlehem, and therefore of the Davidic stock, who shall lead his people to victory and peace. What relation does this prophecy have to the expectation of future glory for Israel? What relation does it bear to the ministry of Jesus? What was the nature of Israel's messianic hope in the times of Isaiah and Micah?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Who was Micah? When and where did he live and work?
2. How did his message concerning Jerusalem differ from that of Isaiah?
3. Can you give a reason for this difference of views?
4. What real and important visitation forms the background upon which Micah presented his pictures of desolation?
5. What class in the community does Micah first attack?
6. What would you judge to have been the attitude of the rulers toward their responsibilities?
7. What does Micah say of the prophets to whom the people look for guidance?
8. What evidences have we of the way in which Micah's preaching was received by the rulers and the leaders?
9. Give in your own words the picture presented in Mic. 4:1–6.
10. Name some sections of the Book of Micah which seem to have come from a different time and person.
11. Into what general division does the book fall?
12. What do you think of Mic. 5:10–15 as a text for anti-militarists?
13. How do you think that a religious man of Micah's day would have answered the question "What doth God require of thee?"
14. What is the answer given by Mic. 6:6–8?
15. What would be your own answer today?
16. What is the theory of the book concerning the ultimate outcome of dishonesty in business?
17. Does your own observation of dishonesty and trickery in the business world confirm Micah's theory?
18. In what way does the composite character of the Book of Micah illustrate the fact that history and prophecy must be studied together?
19. Write a paraphrase of any passage not more than ten verses in length.
20. What abuses in your own community might be abolished if the principles of Micah were applied?

STUDY VI

JEREMIAH AND POLITICAL DECADENCE

If Hosea may be called the prophet of the decline and fall of Israel, not less is Jeremiah the outstanding prophetic figure of the last days of Judah and the witness of that period of political decadence which preceded the end.

A youth in the days when Josiah came to the throne, a friend of that prince, of Hilkiah the priest, and probably also of the prophet Zephaniah, he began his religious activities as early as 626 B.C., and continued for more than half a century to interpret the religion of Jehovah to his people.

He was a contemporary of the last five kings of Judah, from Josiah to Zedekiah. He witnessed, and probably took part in, the wonderful Deuteronomic revival of 621 B.C.; he felt the shock of Josiah's tragic death at Megiddo in 609 B.C., which left the prophetic party, and particularly Jeremiah himself, without encouragement or protection, and shadowed all his later years.

He saw Jehoahaz placed upon the throne of his father by the loyal men of Jerusalem, and plucked thence by Necho II of Egypt after a reign of but three months; through the years of the extravagant and headstrong Jehoiakim from 609 to 597 B.C., he observed with distress the gradual disintegration of the state; and he mourned the pathetic fate of Jehoiachin, the son who held the throne only long enough to meet the blow of Babylonian vengeance which should have fallen upon his father.

Then came the final decade under the amiable and wavering Zedekiah, and at last the tragedy of Judah's fall and the destruction of its capital in 586 B.C. Left with the remnant after the flower of the nation had been deported, Jeremiah continued his ministry of warning and consolation until, in the mad panic that followed the murder of the governor, Gedaliah, he was carried away, reluctant and protesting, by the refugees to Egypt. There the curtain fell upon his sorrowing life.

To Jeremiah there was never granted the joy of rousing his people to a noble duty, with the promise of assured success. He knew from the first that the harvest was past, and the summer ended. His preaching bore ever the burden, "It is too late." No longer was it possible to speak, like Isaiah, a message of optimism. Only the tragedy of exile could prepare the nation for a future of service. But out of the sadness of Jeremiah's experience some of the richest elements of prophetic instruction emerged: and the Sorrowing Prophet of Judah stands as the permanent example of the sacrificial life whose values were brought to their fullest disclosure in the career of the Suffering Servant of God, the Man of Nazareth.

First day.—§ 132. *The prophet's call:* Jer., chap. 1; II Kings, chaps. 22–25. Read Jer. 1:1–3, and note that it is the editorial introduction to the book, naming Jeremiah's father (not to be confused with the Hilkiah of II Kings 22:4, 8), his priestly clan, his native town a few miles northeast of Jerusalem, and the kings with whom he was contemporary. These verses, and probably the entire chapter, belong to a much later date than the chapters that follow. Read II Kings, chaps. 22–25 for the story of the last years of Judah. Read Jer. 1:4–10, and notice that the passage emphasizes the youth of Jeremiah at the time he realized his summons to the task of a prophet, and his reluctance to undertake it. How do you interpret this narrative? Was it the form of Jeremiah's own experience of the divine call, or his manner of making that call known to his people? Read Jer. 1:11–19, and observe that two illustrations are used, the white almond tree—the "watcher"—and the boiling cauldron, signifying the approaching troubles with Babylonia, the terrible world-conquering nation from the North.

Second day.—§ 133. *The idolatries of Judah:* Jer., chap. 2; II Kings, chap. 21; Jer., chap. 3. Read Jer., chap. 2, and notice that it is the first section of a group of utterances extending through chaps. 2–6, and representing the earliest preaching of Jeremiah, probably in that portion of Josiah's reign before the Deuteronomic reformation of 621 B.C. Read in II Kings, chap. 21, the story of the idolatrous reigns of Manasseh and Amon. Now observe in Jeremiah's words the evil influences of the former kings even in the days of Josiah. Does the reference to the nation as the unfaithful wife of Jehovah remind you of Hosea? (Read Jer., chap. 3, in this connection.) What foreign alliances are mentioned? In what manner has Judah outdone the idolatry of other nations?

Third day.—§ 134. *The Scythian terror:* Jer., chaps. 4, 5, 6; Zeph., chaps. 1, 2. Read Jer., chap. 4, and notice that all through the chapter there is reference to an approaching danger so dreadful in its character that the people are paralyzed with fear. Is it probable that this refers to the coming of the Scythians, the "wild horsemen" who are known to have swept down from the North, like the Huns, Goths, and Vandals of later ages, and plundered the nations from Nineveh to Egypt? Read also chaps. 5, 6, and note that the prophet uses the Scythian menace as a means of arousing Judah to a sense of sin, and the necessity of repentance. Read Zeph., chaps. 1, 2, and see how another prophet in Judah, at the same time, made use of the Scythian danger for the same purpose.

Fourth day.—§ 135. *Preaching the covenant: Jeremiah's danger:* Jer., chap. 11; 12:1–6; II Kings, chaps. 22, 23; Jer. 15:15; 17:18; 18:18–23; 20:10, 12. As in the case of the Book of Isaiah, the material of Jeremiah does not come in chronological order, but needs rearrangement. Read Jer. 11:1–8, and note that the prophet is commissioned to preach something that is called "this covenant" in Jerusalem and Judah. Now read II Kings, chaps. 22, 23, for the story of

Josiah's discovery of the Book of the Law in the temple, and his subsequent reformation based thereupon. Is it probable that "the covenant," as the lawbook is there called, was the basis of Jeremiah's preaching? Biblical scholars think it practically certain that the lawbook thus found was our Book of Deuteronomy, or at least its nucleus, chaps. 12–26. Now read Jer. 11:9—12:6, and notice that the prophet not only found the people indifferent to his message but actually hostile to him, especially the men of Anathoth, his own town. Read Jer. 15:15; 17:18; 18:18–23; 20:10, 12 for other instances of opposition, and the prophet's desire for the punishment of his enemies.

Fifth day.—§ 136. *False confidence in the temple and its rites:* Jer., chaps. 7–10. Read Jer., chap. 7, and note that it belongs to a series of messages including chaps. 7–10, and seems to belong to a time after the death of Josiah, and in the reign of Jehoiakim, when relapse into idolatry and the prophet's sorrows had begun in deadly earnest. Note the evidences that popular confidence in the temple and its sacrifices was substituted for morality and real religion. Note also the prophet's threat that Jerusalem shall be destroyed as Shiloh was, and the valley of Topheth, south of the city, shall be filled with the bodies of the dead. Jeremiah saw that such evil conduct as he names in these passages is a sign of the nation's decadence and early doom.

Sixth day.—§ 137. *Jeremiah's peril and deliverance:* Jer., chap. 26; Mic. 3:12. Read the Jeremiah passage, and notice the fact that the prophet's denunciations of the city got him into trouble. Who was it that threatened him? Who took his part? What defense did Jeremiah make? What reference was made to the prophet Micah? Read Mic. 3:12, the text quoted. What use was made of the Micah incident by Jeremiah's defenders? What befell the prophet Uriah, who preached a message much like Jeremiah's? What bearing has this chapter upon the character of Jeremiah?

Seventh day.—§ 138. *The palace and the kings:* Jer. 22:1–19; II Kings 23:30—24:7. Read Jer. 22:1–9, and notice that the prophet trembles for the safety of the royal palace unless there is amendment of the conduct of the kings. Jerusalem and the palace were precious to God, for David's sake, but they could not survive if kings like Jehoiakim continued to rule. Read Jer. 22:10–12, and notice the prophet's plaintive reference to Jehoahaz (Shallum). Read also II Kings 23:30–35, for the brief record of his unfortunate reign. Observe that Jeremiah thinks it useless to mourn for the dead Josiah, but the fate of the unhappy Jehoahaz awakens his regret. Read now Jer. 22:13–19, and also II Kings 23:34—24:7, both of which refer to the reign of Jehoiakim. What does Jeremiah say about the ambitions and sins of the king? How does he contrast him with his father? What sort of an end is forecast for him? Did this come to pass?

Must it not have required unusual courage for a prophet to utter such words about the reigning king?

Eighth day.—§ 139. *The unhappy prophet:* Jer., chaps. 14, 15. Read chap. 15, and also chap. 14, and note that the two belong together, and speak of a drought which has brought great suffering upon the land, and which the prophet attributes to popular errors, the result of false leadership. Notice particularly Jeremiah's frequent references to his own bitter experiences as a prophet, and the seemingly hopeless character of his work. Was not much of Jeremiah's effectiveness as a prophet due to the heartbreaking difficulties he encountered? Would you say the same of religious workers today?

Ninth day.—§ 140. *Potter and clay:* Jer., chap. 18; Rom. 9:19–24. Read the Jeremiah passage, and note the lesson which a potter in his workshop unconsciously taught the prophet—that God is not compelled to adhere to a fixed plan in selecting his instruments, whether individuals or nations. Israel believed itself to be the people of God, and therefore assured of his favor. But the prophet learned and sought to impress the truth that unless the nation proved worthy of its selection it would be cast aside and another chosen. Read Rom. 9:19–24 for the use Paul made of this same illustration. Notice in Jer. 18:18 the reference to the three teaching orders in Israel.

Tenth day.—§ 141. *Topheth and Babylon:* Jer., chaps. 19, 20. Read chap. 19, and notice that the prophet chose a significant object, a jar of pottery, and a suggestive place, the valley of Hinnom, or Topheth, south of the city, the place where rubbish was burned, and where some of the worst forms of idolatry had been practiced. There he denounced the sins of the city and predicted its destruction, shattering the jar to make emphatic his words. Now read chap. 20, and notice that the priest, in anger, put Jeremiah into confinement, and the latter made still clearer the coming fate of the city at the hands of Babylon. Notice also Jeremiah's strong words of lamentation over his unhappy lot.

Eleventh day.—§ 142. *Seventy years of exile:* Jer., chap. 25; Isa. 10:5 f.; Jer. 29:10; Ezra 1:1; Dan. 9:2. Read the first Jeremiah passage, and note the time at which it was uttered, and the length of time that Jeremiah had been preaching. Note also the singular reference in vs. 9 to Nebuchadrezzar as "my servant," i.e., for the discipline of Judah, and compare Isaiah's reference to the Assyrian in similar terms, in Isa. 10:5 f. Does vs. 13 with its reference to the prophet in the third person sound like a later addition by another hand? Note the long list of nations, the neighbors of Judah, which are also to feel the heavy hand of Babylon (the Sheshach of vs. 26). Look up these nations on the map. But note especially the reference in vs. 11 to the seventy years of the coming exile. Read also Jer. 29:10, and the later references to the same prediction in Ezra 1:1 and Dan. 9:2.

Twelfth day.—§ 143. *The lesson of the Rechabites:* Jer., chap. 35; II Kings 10:15 f. Read the chapter, and notice that it draws an illustration of faithfulness to an inherited obligation from the story of a nomadic tribe who settled near Jerusalem for protection, when the Babylonians invaded the land in 604 B.C. What contrast does Jeremiah draw between these Rechabites and the nation? What is the value of the narrative as a temperance lesson? Read II Kings 10:15 f. for another reference to Jonadab the son of Rechab.

Thirteenth day.—§ 144. *Egypt's humiliation:* Jer., chap. 46. Read Jer. 46:1–12, and note that it is the beginning of a series of oracles regarding the nations near Judah—Egypt, Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Damascus, Kedar. These oracles fill chaps. 46–49 and affirm the world-wide rule of Jehovah and his purpose to reckon with the peoples that defy his laws. Do they resemble Amos, chaps. 1, 2? Observe that Jer. 46:1–12 is the prediction of the defeat of Necho II of Egypt by Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon at Carchemish on the Euphrates. Would Jeremiah be likely to rejoice in the defeat of the king who had caused the death of his friend and patron Josiah? Read Jer. 46:13–28, and note that it is the prediction that the victory over Necho shall be followed by the Babylonian conquest of Egypt.

Fourteenth day.—§ 145. *Jeremiah's roll:* Jer., chap. 36. Read the chapter, and note that it introduces Baruch, the friend and secretary of Jeremiah; and that he wrote out the substance of the prophet's previous messages. Would this probably include chaps. 2–12 of our present book? Where was the book read? What was the attitude of the nobles toward it? What did the king do? What was Jeremiah's feeling when he learned what had happened to his roll? Was the message rewritten? Would you suppose the second edition might have included most of chaps. 1–20 of the Book of Jeremiah? Note the bearing of this narrative on the origin of prophetic books.

Fifteenth day.—§ 146. *The fate of Jehoiachin:* Jer. 22:20–30; 24:1; 27:20; II Kings 24:7–16; 25:27–30. Read the first Jeremiah passage, and remember that since the events of the last section the king Jehoiakim has died, and that these words are spoken of the young king, who only reigned three months; also that Jehoiachin (here called Coniah, and in chap. 24 and in 27:20, Jeconiah) was the son of Jehoiakim, and succeeded him in 597 B.C. Read II Kings 24:7–16; 25:27–30, for the story of this unhappy prince, who was compelled to pay dearly for the sins of his father, and who was only released from his Babylonian prison many years later. Observe that it was Jeremiah's view that it was useless for Judah to resist the power of Nebuchadrezzar. The only safety lay in submission and loyalty.

Sixteenth day.—§ 147. *Two baskets of figs:* Jer., chap. 24; II Kings 24:17–20. Read the passage, and note that another son of Josiah, Zedekiah, has been placed

on the throne from which his unfortunate nephew was taken to Babylon. Read II Kings 24:17–20 for the story of his accession. Observe that the most resourceful of the people of Judah were taken away into Babylon in 597 B.C. Notice that in chap. 24 Jeremiah compares the two groups of Hebrews, and thinks those who remained in Judah were of little value as compared with those who were taken away.

Seventeenth day.—§ 148. *The yoke of Babylon:* Jer., chaps. 27, 28, and chap. 23. Read Jer. 27:1, and compare it with vss. 3 and 12, and 28:1, noting that "Jehoiakim" is a mistake for "Zedekiah"; also notice Jeremiah's forcible messages to the neighboring nations regarding the certainty of Babylonian victory, and the folly of resistance. Observe his denunciation of the popular prophets, who are insisting that there is no danger, and that the exiles who already have been deported shall soon return. Read also chap. 23 for a bitter rebuke to the prophets who speak without knowledge. Now read chap. 28, the narrative of a personal encounter with one of the misguided "patriots" of Judah. Compare the condition of Judah in this period with the decadence of Spain, Turkey, Persia, and Korea in our day.

Eighteenth day.—§ 149. *Jeremiah's letter to the exiles:* Jer., chap. 29. Read the chapter, and note that the prophet used the opportunity afforded by the departure of an embassy to Babylon to send a letter, counseling the exiles to give up all hopes of an early return, and to refuse to listen to the foolish encouragements of popular leaders who were trying to incite them to attempt opposition to the government in Babylonia, and to escape from captivity. Notice the use made of the yokes, as illustrations of national servitude.

Nineteenth day.—§ 150. *Jeremiah's advice to the king:* Jer., chap. 21; 34:1–7. Read the chapter, and note that in spite of all the lessons which the past had taught, and the constant warnings of Jeremiah, the court, probably relying on promises of help from Egypt, had involved the nation in fresh trouble with Babylonia. Now King Zedekiah sends to the prophet to inquire regarding the issue of the present invasion of the land. Notice that Jeremiah holds out no hope of escape, but advises surrender to Nebuchadrezzar. Read 34:1–7, a further oracle of the prophet to Zedekiah.

Twentieth day.—§ 151. *The re-enslaved freedmen:* Jer. 34:8–22; Exod. 21:2; Deut. 15:12. Read the Jeremiah passage, and in connection with it read the law in Exod. 21:2 and Deut. 15:12 regarding the release of slaves after six years. Now notice that the people of Judah, when they were threatened by the Babylonian army, sought to gain the favor of God by releasing their slaves; but later, when the danger seemed less, they retracted their good action, and reclaimed their slaves. Observe the indignation of the prophet at this conduct, and his repetition of his oft-repeated prediction of the fall of Jerusalem.

Twenty-first day.—§ 152. *Jeremiah's arrest:* Jer., chap. 37. Read the Jeremiah chapter, and recall the fact that Egypt was always promising assistance to Palestine if it would revolt from Babylonia, but that the prophets felt that this assistance could not be depended on. In the present instance Pharaoh Hophra made an expedition to the aid of Judah against Nebuchadrezzar, but it was of only momentary value. Notice Jeremiah's unwavering confidence that resistance to Babylon was useless. Observe further that the prophet was arrested on the charge that he was deserting. How did he reply? How was he treated? Why did the king send to him? What was his answer? What request did he make?

Twenty-second day.—§ 153. *The last days of Jerusalem:* Jer., chaps. 38, 39; II Kings 25:1–22. Read chap. 38, and note the charge of disloyalty that was made against the prophet. What did the princes wish to do with him? What was the king's attitude toward him? Was Zedekiah unfriendly or helpless? What was done with Jeremiah? How was his life saved? What advice did the prophet give Zedekiah? What request did the king make of Jeremiah?

Twenty-third day.—§ 154. *The Book of Consolation:* Jer., chaps. 30, 31. Read these chapters, and notice their tone of confident hope for the future of the nation. Uttered at the very time when all that the prophet loved was falling into ruin, they breathe the spirit of assurance that Jehovah is working out his plans, even by means of these sore visitations. The mother-heart of Rachel mourns over her captive children from her grave; but they shall return and rebuild their cities. No longer shall their troubles be charged against their ancestors, but each shall recognize his own responsibility. The words of 31:31–40 are among the finest in the Old Testament. They describe the terms of the New Covenant which God will make with his restored people.

Twenty-fourth day.—§ 155. *The field and the promise:* Jer., chaps. 32, 33. Read the chapters, and notice that, as if to bear witness to his confidence that Jerusalem would again be built, after the destruction by the Babylonians (Chaldeans), Jeremiah purchased a plot of ground in Anathoth, his native town. It was as bold an act as that of the Roman who bought the field in which the army of Hannibal was camped. Notice also the confidence of Jeremiah that although the royal house of Judah is overthrown, yet the dynasty of David shall not lack a king upon the throne. This is his glowing messianic hope. Israel's mission is not to fail, for God's covenant shall stand.

Twenty-fifth day.—§ 156. *The fall of Jerusalem:* Jer., chap. 39; II Kings 25:1–22. Read the chapter, and also II Kings 25:1–22, both of which tell the story of Jerusalem's tragic fall. David had taken the city from the Jebusites about 1000 B.C., and Solomon built the temple about 975 B.C. After some four centuries, in 586 B.C. it was totally destroyed, and its people partly taken to Babylon and partly left to care for themselves as best they could without

king, temple, or capital. Thus the predictions of Jeremiah were completely fulfilled.

Twenty-sixth day.—§ 157. *The flight into Egypt:* Jer. 40:1–6; chaps. 42, 43. Read these passages, and note that Jeremiah was granted the choice of going with the exiles to Babylon or staying with the remnant in Judah. Choosing the latter course, he tried after the murder of Gedaliah, the governor left in charge of the people, to calm the terrified Hebrews, and persuade them to remain where they were and work out their problems there. But against his earnest protest they decided to seek safety in Egypt, and took with them the reluctant prophet and Baruch his servant.

Twenty-seventh day.—§ 157. *Last words of Jeremiah:* Jer., chap. 44. Read the chapter, and notice that in the last view we have of Jeremiah he is witnessing in Egypt to the will of God, in the face of obstinate skepticism and persistent idolatry on the part of his people. What are the arguments of the people regarding the value of serving Jehovah? What are Jeremiah's answers? Few more pathetic figures are disclosed by history than Jeremiah, laboring for more than half a century against overwhelming odds, yet ever true to the divine purpose, and bearing to the end his heavy burden of sorrow in behalf of the people he loved. If Jeremiah were living today what would be his attitude toward public life and responsibilities?

Twenty-eighth day.—The times of Jeremiah. The foregoing sections have given convincing proof of the decadent period in which Jeremiah's ministry fell. The reign of Josiah (639–609 B.C.) witnessed an earnest effort on the part of the king and the prophetic party to eradicate the evil results of the policy of Manasseh and Amon; and the great reformation of 621 B.C., based on the Book of Deuteronomy, was a determined effort to restore the ancient worship to its rightful place. But it was too late. Popular sentiment was hostile, and the king's untimely death removed the central figure in the movement. Jehoahaz reigned but three months (609 B.C.). The reign of Jehoiakim (died 597 B.C.) was a steady moral decline. The kingdom was drained of its resources, and its vacillating policy involved it with the great power on the Euphrates. Jehoiachin only reigned for a brief period, and the last of the kings, Zedekiah (597–586 B.C.), had no strength to uphold the tottering fabric. The fall of Judah was due to inherent weakness, the result of luxury, immorality, entangling alliances, and foolish leadership. Are these to be found in modern nations?

Twenty-ninth day.—The man Jeremiah. Few men have ever been given a more difficult task than that assigned to this prophet. Naturally sensitive to the opinion of the community, and a patriot of the most devoted type, he was placed in the unhappy position of seeming to be both pessimistic and unpatriotic. No doubt is left in the mind of the student that his life was often in danger (see 11:10,

21; 12:6; 15:15; 18:18; 20:10). There were times when his sorrows seemed to him too heavy to be borne (see 8:18; 9:1; 15:10, 17; 16:1; 20:14–18). At other times he broke out into fierce invective against his enemies (see 12:3; 17:18; 18:18–23; 20:12). Once he decided to give over altogether the work of a prophet, but the inner impulse was too strong, and he went on (see 20:9). He never doubted that his commission was from God, and that through all his sorrowful life he was working out the divine purpose (see chap. 1; 15:16; 26:15). He is the sorrowing prophet, but also the messenger of eternal hope.

Thirtieth day.—The Book of Jeremiah. Like the Book of Isaiah, this collection of prophetic messages is neither arranged in chronological order, nor is it all from the prophet himself. As the material is too extensive to find inclusion in a treatment of this kind, it has been necessary to omit certain portions. But all the essential sections have been included. Chap. 36 describes the origin of what was probably the first and second editions of the book. As already suggested, the portion there written by Baruch may have embraced chaps. 1–20. Other sections were probably prepared from time to time, either by the devoted Baruch or by other hands. Portions of the final chapters are copies of the documents of II Kings. In spite of its mournful tone, the Book of Jeremiah is one of the most beautiful in the prophetic collection, especially the Book of Consolation, chaps. 30–33.

Thirty-first day.—The Message of Jeremiah. There were at least four periods in the long ministry of Jeremiah: the first, the enthusiastic and measurably successful time, including his earliest work and the period of the great reformation; the second, the years of disillusionment and disappointment, after the reformation, when the tendency to relapse into the evil ways of Manasseh's reign was all too apparent; the third, the critical and disastrous time of national decadence, from the death of Josiah to the coming of Nebuchadrezzar; the fourth, the period of full illumination and confident hope, at the end. The message of Jeremiah included denunciation of popular idolatry and the immoralities which it stimulated; of the popular preaching, which repeated the confident hopes of Isaiah in an age when Isaiah's message was no longer timely; and of the political policies of men like Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, who either encouraged foreign influences or were too weak to resist them. On the constructive side, Jeremiah emphasized the purpose of God for the nation, the safety of the moral life, and the survival of the chastened and enlightened Israel. Is it well to consider here the failure of Israel to recognize the truth of her prophet's message and to raise the question to what extent we are today turning deaf ears to the voices of our modern political and social prophets? Not the least important of the truths taught by Jeremiah is the value of suffering as a moral discipline and a preparation for service. This is equally true of the individual and the nation. When the great war of nations

is over, will the world-peace be more secure because of the chastening effect of suffering upon nation and citizen?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Who was Jeremiah?
2. About how long did he preach in Judah?
3. In what important respect did his message differ from that of Isaiah?
4. What was the attitude of the people toward idolatry in the early days of Jeremiah and what toward Jehovah?
5. What nation threatened to destroy Judah when Jeremiah first commenced to preach?
6. Tell all that you can about King Josiah.
7. What was the book which influenced the king and Jeremiah?
8. What were the central principles of the book concerning Jehovah and the place for his worship?
9. Why was Josiah's reformation not permanent?
10. What do we mean by the "symbolic sermons" of Jeremiah?
11. Describe the one which you consider strongest.
12. How did Jeremiah try to make his messages permanent?
13. Give the story of one of his "rolls."
14. What three kings succeeded Josiah, and what was their relation to him?
15. What was Jeremiah's attitude toward each of them?
16. How would you describe Jeremiah's attitude toward Babylon?
17. When Jerusalem finally fell, why did he not gain safety and comfort for himself by accepting the offer of the Babylonians?
18. What can you say of his later life?
19. Why did not the people recognize Jeremiah as a true prophet of Jehovah?
20. Will you name modern reformers who have met with a similar lack of recognition of their messages?

STUDY VII

ZEPHANIAH, NAHUM, HABAKKUK, AND OBADIAH: THE ANSWER OF THE PROPHETS TO THE QUESTION, WHAT IS GOD'S PART IN HISTORY?

Contemporaneous with various portions of the long ministry of Jeremiah, which continued from 627 B.C. until after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., there were four prophets who spoke on various phases of the national life, particularly in regard to the problems arising out of Judah's relation to her neighbors. These are the ones whose work is reviewed in this study.

No reference to these men is made by Jeremiah in any surviving oracle of his; nor do any of the four prophets mention their great contemporary. Yet this does not appear strange when one reflects upon the large amount of spoken and written prophecy which has not survived to our day, and the variety of interests, religious, ethical, social, and political, which engaged the attention of these moral leaders.

In reading these four brief books, one notices the almost total absence of the social solicitude which has occupied so large a place in the work of the preachers whose ministries have been studied thus far. It is not with ethical, hardly even with religious, themes that these men are engaged, save as these values are implicit in the national problems of their day. It is rather with Judah's political fortunes, as they are affected by the surrounding peoples, the Scythians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and the Edomites, that the prophets of this order concern themselves.

Is it for this reason that less of their material has survived? Were the great social teachings of men like Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, and Jeremiah regarded as of larger value, and so preserved in fuller volume? Be that as it may, these less conspicuous champions of the national life of Judah are most valuable sources for the study of her problems and sentiments, and the intensity of their political faith and loyalty are notable commentaries upon that persistent belief in the providential issue of Israel's life, the results of which are witnessed in their later history, and in the religious experiences of the world.

First day.—§ 158. *The terrible threat of destruction:* Zeph. 1:1–6; Jer., chaps. 4, 6; II Kings, chaps, 21, 23. Read the Zephaniah passage, and observe in vs. 1 the long genealogy, unusual in the case of prophets, and its termination in

Hezekiah, presumably the royal great-grandfather of Josiah. Note also the date, probably about 626 B.C. In vss. 2–6 note the prediction of overwhelming destruction about to come upon all living things. Would it seem reasonable that the prophet here has in mind the terror of the Scythian invasion, to which Jeremiah seems to refer in chaps. 4, 6? Glance through the records of Manasseh's reign in II Kings, chaps. 21, 23, for references to the same forms of idolatry mentioned in these verses. It is upon idolaters that destruction is to fall.

Second day.—§ 159. *The day of Jehovah:* Zeph. 1:7–13. Read the passage, and notice the announcement of the approaching "day of Jehovah," probably connected in the prophet's mind with the Scythian devastation, but not exhausted by it. Note the classes who shall suffer in this visitation: the members of the royal family, those who practice superstitious rites, the violent, and the fraudulent. All parts of the city shall suffer. The secrets of fraud and selfishness shall be searched out.

Third day.—§ 160. *"Dies irae, dies illa":* Zeph. 1:14–18; Matt. 25:31–46. Read the Zephaniah passage, and observe the solemn character of the announcement that the day of wrath is near. This passage made a deep impression upon later Jewish and Christian thought. It seems to serve as one of the early bases for the doctrine of the Day of Judgment, which plays so important a part in the theology of the church. A mediaeval hymn, by Thomas of Celano, bears the title given above, and is the classic hymn on the subject. Compare the picture here given with that presented by Jesus in Matt. 25:31–46.

Fourth day.—§ 161. *Philistia's peril:* Zeph. 2:1–7; I Sam., chaps. 4–7, 13, 14, 31. Read the Zephaniah text, and note the explicit references to the doom that is to befall Israel's ancient oppressors, the Philistines. For records of the depredations wrought by them, glance through I Sam., chaps. 4–7, 13, 14, 31. Where was Philistia, and what were its cities? Would the fact that the Philistines were directly in the path of the advancing Scythians give point to the prophet's word? Note that vs. 3 seems to be a later and interpolated reference to the people of Jehovah.

Fifth day.—§ 162. *The doom of Ammon and Moab.* Zeph. 2:8–11; Amos, chaps. 1, 2. Read the passage from Zephaniah and notice that it deals with two peoples east of the Jordan, and quite out of the path of the Scythians. For this reason, and, further, because of the intensity of the national hostility manifested, and the remoter issues of vs. 11, the entire passage is regarded by many as later than the times of Zephaniah. It reflects, however, the antagonism felt toward the two trans-Jordanic tribes. Compare the spirit of this passage with that of Amos, chaps, 1, 2.

Sixth day.—§ 163. *Ethiopia and Assyria:* Zeph. 2:12–15. Read the passage, and note that it refers to the two nations who had been the out-

standing rulers of the world, west and east. The Ethiopians ruled Egypt for a half-century shortly before Zephaniah's time; and Egypt was the southern goal of the Scythian raid. Assyria, the great empire between the Tigris and Euphrates, had Nineveh for its capital. That empire fell before the Medes and Babylonians in 606 B.C. But Zephaniah may well have believed that the wild Scythian horsemen would be the cause of its overthrow. (As we shall soon see, the Book of Nahum, especially chaps. 2, 3, is the classic prophecy of the downfall of Nineveh.)

Seventh day.—§ 164. *Jerusalem the unholy:* Zeph 3:1–5. Read the passage, noting that it is one of the few sections in these books that has the ring of sympathy with the victims of social injustice. There is much the same tone as in the contemporary words of Jeremiah in the period before the great reformation of Josiah. What are the sins charged against Jerusalem? (Vss. 6, 7 seem unrelated to their context, and are probably of later date.)

Eighth day.—§ 165. *The purification of Judah:* Zeph. 3:8–13. Read the text, and note that in it Jehovah promises his people that he will punish the nations that have wasted them; yet with milder spirit he affirms that he will speak persuasively to the peoples, and they shall turn to him. The holy nation shall be gathered home from the distant lands, and purified of its evil elements. The humbled remnant shall dwell pure and protected. The tone of the entire passage is post-exilic.

Ninth day.—§ 166. *The Golden Age to come:* Zeph. 3:14–20. Read the passage, and note that it is either the utterance of an age when danger no more menaces Jerusalem, or the prophet in his confidence places himself in that ideal future. Jehovah is the national deliverer. The true Israel rejoices, fearless and triumphant, the humble are upraised, and the proud driven away. Israel becomes the glory of the nations.

Tenth day.—§ 167. *The mighty God:* Nah. 1:1–10. Read the passage, and note that vs. 1 gives the theme of the book, and the name and residence of the prophet. The entire book is devoted to the approaching doom of Nineveh. Nothing is known of Nahum aside from the book, and Elkosh is an unknown place. Vss. 2–10 in the original are an acrostic, the lines beginning with the successive letters of the alphabet. For this reason, as well as their indefinite and apocalyptic character, they are thought to be later than the body of the work in chaps. 2 and 3, and put in as a general introduction. What is the theme of these verses?

Eleventh day.—§ 168. *Comfort and threatening.* Nah. 1:11–15. Read the passage, and notice the evidence of two entirely different themes: vss. 11 and 14 addressed apparently to Nineveh, and constituting probably the first authentic words of Nahum in condemnation of the heathen city; vss. 12, 13. and 15, wholly

different in tone, and evidently part of an oracle of comfort to Judah, perhaps based upon the doom of Nineveh.

Twelfth day.—§ 169. *The siege of Nineveh:* Nah. 2:1–5. Read the passage, and note the vividiness of the picture of Nineveh's distress and overthrow. Ironically the prophet bids the mighty capital defend itself. Then he describes the desperate efforts made in attack and defense. The armed chariots rush to and fro, the commanders are exhorted to the charge, and protections are set up. The student will not fail to notice the realism of the description.

Thirteenth day.—§ 170. *The den of lions:* Nah. 2:6–13. Read the passage, and notice that in some unknown manner the waters of the Tigris played a part in the overthrow of the city. The queen, or the goddess, or the personified city, is stripped and carried away, amid the mourning of her maidens. Like a pool her people melt away. Enormous plunder is taken away, and so the city that was lion-like in its power vanishes forever from the earth.

Fourteenth day.—§ 171. *The bloody city:* Nah. 3:1–7. Read the passage, and note how in verse after verse the prophet pursues the theme of Nineveh's overthrow. As the most hated of the oppressors of Israel, her destruction was an immeasurable relief. The career of Assyria had been one of almost uninterrupted triumph. Her power had been felt in all the earth. But she is soon to be punished for her cruelty, her pride, and her seductive idolatries. To the astonishment of all men, she is now to be laid waste.

Fifteenth day.—§ 172. *Nineveh shall fall like Thebes:* Nah. 3:8–19. Read the passage, and observe that it refers to the capture of Thebes (No-Amon), the capital of Upper Egypt, by Ashurbanipal in 661 B.C. This reference, and the fact that the fall of Nineveh, the prophetic theme of Nahum, occurred in 606 B.C., set the limits within which the book must have been written. The precise date was probably about 608 B.C. The prophet declares that a fate like that of Thebes shall in turn befall Nineveh. Again in ironical language he summons her people to defend themselves. Numberless leaders and countless wealth cannot save them. Their guardians are helpless and her fate is sealed, and thus, with a satisfaction that makes evident the bitterness of Hebrew hatred of Assyria, the prophet brings his taunt to a close. What do you think of the spirit of this book? How do you think it compares with Amos or Micah?

Sixteenth day.—§ 173. *The prophet's perplexity and the divine answer:* Hab. 1:1–11; II Kings 23:36—24:17. Read the Habakkuk passage, and note that vs. 1 is the superscription, which tells us all we know of Habakkuk; that vss. 2–4 give the perplexed comment of the prophet upon the lawlessness and social injustice of the times, which would seem to correspond to the reign of Jehoiakim, probably its latter period, between the battle of Carchemish (605 B.C.) and the first siege of Jerusalem (597 B.C.); and that vss. 5–11 provide the divine response,

to the effect that God is raising up the fierce Babylonians (Chaldeans) as the instrument for the punishment of the oppressive and wicked in Judah. Read II Kings 23:36—24:17 for references to the military operations of the Babylonians in Palestine.

Seventeenth day.—§ 174. *A deeper perplexity:* Hab. 1:12–17. Read the passage, and observe that the visitation of the Babylonians, predicted in vss. 5–11, has evidently taken place. The oracle is therefore later than the previous one, and doubtless belongs after the siege of 597 B.C. A fresh and more disquieting perplexity now disturbs the prophet. Why does God permit such merciless treatment of Judah at the hands of these heathen? The hand of Assyria was heavy; but that of Babylonia is heavier still. It is the embodiment of mere crushing brute force, delighting in malice and self-glorification. Why does Jehovah, the ever-loving God, allow such miseries to be inflicted on his people? Do you think these words find echo in the hearts of many of the war-distressed people of today?

Eighteenth day.—§ 175. *The divine response:* Hab. 2:1–5; Gal. 3:11. Read the Habakkuk passage, and note that with dramatic impressiveness it gives the divine oracle in answer to the perplexed question of vss. 12–17 above. Observe that in vs. 1 the prophet figuratively withdraws to his tower of observation and silence, to wait for the divine word. Note also that vs. 2 gives Jehovah's preliminary direction to write down upon clay tablets, after the Babylonian manner, the oracle now to be given, so that it will be readable and permanent. Then vs. 3 brings assurance that the oracle pertains to days ahead, but not far distant, and is to be waited for in confidence. Then in vs. 4 comes the divine word at last: "All that you say of the oppressor is true; but the righteous shall live by his (or my) faithfulness," by trust in God and unwavering loyalty to his will. Note Paul's use of this oracle in Gal 3:11, and in his entire discussion of justification by faith in the epistles to the Galatians and Romans. How does his use of the words differ from the prophet's? To what degree do you think the oracle would be a comfort to the people of Judah? Note that vs. 5 amplifies the description of the Babylonian oppressor.

Nineteenth day.—§ 176. *The fivefold woe:* Hab. 2:6–20. Read the passage, and note that it contains five "woes," presumably uttered against the foes referred to in the previous verses. But notice also that these maledictions are somewhat general in their character, and might be used in any denunciation of oppression, cruel ambition, injustice, drunkenness, violence, or idolatry. Perhaps they belong to a later period than that of the prophet. Is there evidence of greater social concern in Habakkuk than in Zephaniah and Nahum? Observe the quotations in vs. 12 from Mic. 3:10; in vs. 13 from Jer. 51:58; and in vs. 14 from Isa. 11:9.

Twentieth day.—§ 177. *The manifestation of God:* Hab. 3:1–15; Deut. 33:2; Ps. 77:16–20; Judg. 5:4, 5. Read the Habakkuk passage, and note that it has the form of a psalm, uses the musical notation "on stringed instruments" at the opening and the close, and twice employs the pausal direction "Selah," which appears elsewhere only in the Psalms. Read also Deut. 33:2, and compare it with vs. 3; and compare Ps. 77:16–20 with vss. 10, 11, 15. It is a demand for the appearance of God in vengeance on the enemies of Judah, and a figurative description of such an event, based on Judg. 5:4, 5 and the passages already cited. Would such a picture of divine power be a comfort to the afflicted in Judah and in exile?

Twenty-first day.—§ 178. *Jehovah is the strength of his people:* Hab. 3:16–19; II Sam. 22:34; Ps. 18:33. Read the Habakkuk passage, and observe that it is the psalmist's meditation upon the manifestation of Jehovah of vss. 3–15. The first effect is terror, but confidence in God brings joy and strength. Read II Sam. 22:34 and Ps. 18:33, and compare with vs. 19. The relation of chap. 3 to chaps. 1, 2 is not intimate, and it may come from a much later age. Its note is that of the intense nationalism which appears in the prophets of this group.

Twenty-second day.—§ 179. *The oracle against Edom:* Obad. 1–9; Jer. 49:7–22; Mal. 1:2–5; Gen. 25:19–34. Read the Obadiah passage, and compare it with Jer. 49:7–22. Does it not seem probable that Obadiah had before him the older oracle of Jeremiah, and was partly quoting and partly commenting upon it? Recall the fact that Edom was the race of Esau, living south of the Dead Sea, in the rocky defiles where later the rock city of Petra was constructed. Throughout their history there had been bitter hostility between Judah and the Edomites. Note that in vss. 1–4 the prophet recalls the older oracle against Edom, and in vss. 5–7 comments on a calamity that has recently befallen that people, perhaps attacks of Arabians or Nabateans from the desert, which drove them out of their rocky fastnesses northward. Read also Mal. 1:2–5, and consider the probability that these words refer to the same spoiling of Edom. In vss. 8, 9 the influence of the Jeremiah passage is again seen. Read Gen. 25:19–34 for the early story of Jacob and Esau.

Twenty-third day.—§ 180. *The crime of Edom:* Obad. 10–14; II Kings 24:18—25:11; Ps. 137:7–9. Read the Obadiah passage, and note that it seems to refer to the conduct of the Edomites at the time of Jerusalem's destruction by Nebuchadrezzar in 586 B.C. The words, probably written long afterward, recall in terms of warning the hostile behavior of Edom in that time of agony for Jerusalem. Read again, II Kings 24:18—25:11, the story of the capture of Jerusalem. No mention of the Edomites is there made, but the prophets supplied the lacking details. Read Psalm 137:7–9, and notice how the Edomites and Babylonians

are linked together in that terrible cry for vengeance upon the enemies of Jerusalem.

Twenty-fourth day.—§ 181. *The day of Jehovah upon Edom:* Obad. 15–21; Isa. 63:1–6. Read the Obadiah passage, and note that it is more general in tone, and would seem to be a sort of appendix, probably much later in date. It affirms the coming of the "day of Jehovah"—the time of judgment—upon all the nations, but especially upon Edom. It recalls the Edomite revels on Mt. Zion and predicts that in the future the restored Judah will consume Edom. The sections of Palestine that have been occupied by clans like the Edomites and the Philistines shall be reoccupied by the people of Judah returning from exile. This hope of a future reckoning with Edom seems to have been persistent through the history. Read Isa. 63:1–6, and see how a prophet living in the post-exilic days looked longingly forward to the time when Israel's ideal warrior, the messianic king, would come to his people with his garments drenched in the blood of Edom. In such passages the strong nationalistic spirit has its fullest expression.

Twenty-fifth day.—The Book of Zephaniah. Review the Book of Zephaniah, and recall that it appears to have as its background an expected calamity, which is about to befall Judah and its neighbors. Remember that this has been thought to be the great Scythian raid of 627 B.C., in the reign of Josiah, from which, fortunately, Judah escaped. But both Jeremiah and Zephaniah used the event to emphasize their call to repentance. Notice that this prophet is concerned to warn Jerusalem regarding the impending danger, which he calls the "day of Jehovah." His is the spirit of deep national solicitude, but it is based on desire to see the people repent of their false worship, their foreign customs, and their disregard of Jehovah. *Is the prophet right in believing that righteousness is the best protection against outward dangers?*

Twenty-sixth day.—The Book of Nahum. Read the book again, and notice that, as in Zephaniah, its interest is not in the judgment upon Judah, but in the fall of Assyria, her great enemy. It is one of the most vivid and picturesque of the prophetic works. It probably dates from about 608 B.C., a short time before the fall of Nineveh. The description of the siege and fall of Nineveh is full of life and color. But it is nationalistic in the external and political sense. Zephaniah also looked forward to the destruction of Assyria, but was more concerned with the discipline to be inflicted on Jerusalem. Nahum is absorbed in the sentiment of triumph over the approaching fall of the great persecutor of his people. How would you estimate the two types of nationalism? Which would have most value for the moral life of a nation? Is the sentiment of nationalism as contrasted with internationalism increasing or declining?

Twenty-seventh day.—The Book of Habakkuk. Read the book again, considering once more the perplexity of the prophet over the violence and wrong-doing

in the land, and the divine response that soon there shall come discipline at the hands of the Babylonians (Chaldeans). This portion of the book seems to date from the troubled reign of Jehoiakim, about 600 B.C. Later the prophet, astonished and distressed at the ferocity of these insolent invaders, raises the question as to how God can permit a people far more evil than Judah herself, and more merciless than her former oppressors, the Assyrians, to bring this desolation upon the land. The answer is the oracle, that faithfulness is the secret of survival. Is this a permanent principle of national life? This portion of the prophecy, and the woes that follow, seem to emerge from the period following the fall of Jerusalem. The final chapter is a psalm in celebration of the power of God. This book possesses the national spirit to a marked degree. Like the others of the group, it is less concerned with moral and social problems than with the prospects of Judah.

Twenty-eighth day.—The Book of Obadiah. Read the book, the briefest in the Old Testament, and note that it has a single and simple theme, a denunciation of Edom, a shout of exultation over the troubles coming upon her, and a prediction of more disastrous days ahead. The intensity of national resentment against the foes of Judah reaches its climax in this book. No concern is evinced for the moral or religious advance of the prophet's own people, but only for vengeance upon their enemies. Yet such a spirit is true to the life of an ancient people, and has not, even in this age, died out of the human heart. Are such books useful for instruction or for warning? Is this the type of patriotism the world most needs?

Twenty-ninth day.—Judah and the nations. In all the studies of this course, it has been apparent that one of the most important elements in the social, political, and religious life of Israel was the influence of the neighboring nations upon her. It is too late in the centuries to attempt the study of Old Testament history and religion without careful attention to the peoples who constituted the environment of Hebrew life. In the present study the significance of these surrounding influences is more than ever apparent. The chief concern of these four prophets was the effect of Scythian, Assyrian, Babylonian, and Edomite behavior upon the fortunes of Judah. By such means the scope of national thought was widened, and the conception of Jehovah as a world-ruler was strengthened. But was there any solicitude as to the influence Israel ought to exert upon her neighbors?

Thirtieth day.—The national spirit. The hardships which Israel suffered at the hands of the neighboring peoples did much to intensify the feeling of devotion to the land and to its history. No nation that has not suffered for the sake of its possessions and institutions can realize their value. Yet is it not true that national life is largely the result of geographical conditions? Why should Europe be

broken up into many hostile and suspicious nations, while the American states have no such jealousies and antagonisms? Is the love of humanity of a higher order than the love of country? What effect would such considerations have upon the continuance of war?

Thirty-first day.—Present value of this group of prophets. Noting the prevalence of national over ethical, social, and religious concern in these prophets, are they to be counted as of the same value as Amos, Isaiah, and Micah? How far is it probable that they expressed the spirit of the prophets just named? How far would Jesus approve of the spirit of these books? Would you call Jesus a nationalist in any sense? Would you think of him as a patriot? In what way would the prevalence of his ideas prevent international jealousy and war? Is America fortunately situated to interpret to the other nations the ethics of Jesus on this theme?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What prophets were the interpreters of the Scythian invasion to the people of Judah?
2. How did Zephaniah interpret it?
3. What does he mean by the "Day of Jehovah"?
4. State some of the differences between the Day of Jehovah as pictured by Zephaniah and the "Judgment Day" of Jesus.
5. What nations were to suffer in this visitation of Jehovah?
6. In what ways does chap. 3 differ from the earlier portion? How may we account for this difference?
7. What do we know about Nahum personally?
8. What is the purpose of his book?
9. What had been the relation of Nineveh (the capital of Assyria) to Israel and Judah?
10. When did Nineveh actually fall and through what power?
11. What was the general thought of the prophets as to the reason for Israel's calamities?
12. To what great question made by Habakkuk and shared by the faithful in Judah did continuous triumph of their enemies give rise?
13. What was Habakkuk's answer to the question?
14. What do you think of it as a message of comfort? Can we give a better answer today? If so, what is it?
15. Who were the Edomites, and what had been their relation to the Hebrews?
16. What do you think of Obadiah as a prophet (speaker for God)?

17. For what reason do you suppose that such extensive portions of the sermons of Isaiah and Jeremiah have survived while we have only brief scraps from the prophets considered this month?

18. Jesus was a student of the prophets. From which of those that you know would he receive most inspiration?

19. Can a nation live up to his highest ideal, unless other nations do the same? Why? or How?

20. Is national or international spirit the higher? Why? What dangers are there in this answer?

STUDY VIII

PROPHETS OF THE EXILE AND THEIR MESSAGE OF EVANGELISM

One of the most important periods in the history of Israel was the Exile, which began with the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. and the removal of a large company of the people into Babylonia, and closed with the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus the Great in 538 B.C.

During this period, and indeed continuously thereafter, there were three groups of Israelites—those who remained in Judah, those who were taken to Babylonia, and those who took refuge in Egypt. The first group was the most numerous, and the second the most resourceful in ability and possessions. From these three groups developed the Judaism of later years.

The Exile brought to an end the political independence of Judah, and transferred the scene of its chief activities from Palestine to Babylonia. It also changed its character, point of view, and interests. The exiles were distributed in various parts of the region between the Tigris and Euphrates, in small communities, like the one at Tel-abib, on the Chebar Canal.

There was no longer a king, the temple was destroyed, and most of the functions of church and state were neglected. At first the people were greatly depressed, feeling that Jehovah had forsaken them. The problems they had to face included these: Is our God unable or unwilling to save us from our enemies? How can we worship him, removed as we are from the land where he abides? Why is it that those of us who have been most faithful to Jehovah have suffered more than the rest? Is there any future for our nation, or are we to disappear, as other peoples in the past?

In this period, at the beginning of which Jeremiah was still engaged in his prophetic task in Jerusalem, and later in Egypt, there were two prophetic voices lifted for the admonition and encouragement of the people in exile. The first of these was Ezekiel, and the second was the prophet whose message is contained in chaps. 40–55 of the Book of Isaiah, and who for convenience may be called the Second Isaiah, or the Isaiah of the Exile.

First day.—§ 182. *Vision and call of Ezekiel:* Ezek. 1:1–28. Read the passage, and note that the events it records happened in the thirtieth year (presumably of Ezekiel's age), and five years after the first siege of Jerusalem in

597 B.C., when he, with other exiles, including the unfortunate Jehoiachin, was brought from Palestine to the banks of the Chebar, a river or canal in Babylonia. The chapter is taken up with the description of a mighty chariot, the different features of which are detailed minutely. Now glance through chap. 2, and chap. 3 as far as vs. 21, and notice that the divine being, seated upon the great chariot, and thus able to move from land to land, calls Ezekiel to be a prophet to the Jews in exile, and charges him with responsibility for their warning.

Second day.—§ 183. *Tokens of Jerusalem's fall:* Ezek. 3:22—4:17. Read the passage, and note that the prophet was given further instruction for his task, and told to make clear to the exiles of his district that it was useless for them to look for an early return to Jerusalem, for that city must fall as a punishment for its sins. Notice the three ways in which Ezekiel was to illustrate the approaching fate of the capital: by drawing a picture of the city besieged, by lying on his side like a captive for many days, betokening the lengthened years of the Exile, and by living upon famine fare. Now glance through chaps. 5–7, and notice that the theme is the same: Jerusalem cannot escape destruction, because of its sins. Is it probable that Ezekiel, as a priest, was familiar with the immorality, idolatry, and formal service of Jerusalem?

Third day.—§ 184. *The idolatries of Jerusalem:* Ezek. 8:1–18. Read the passage, and observe that it describes, in the form of an imaginary journey of the prophet back to Jerusalem, the various forms of idolatry practiced there. Such images as were set up for worship, and such pictures as were drawn on the walls even of the temple itself, might well be supposed to arouse the jealous anger of Jehovah. Note the references also to the worship of Tammuz, the Syrian Adonis, and the sun. Now glance through chaps. 9–11, and note the further hints of coming destruction for Jerusalem, of the exile of its people, but also of a later restoration. Notice also the fresh picture of the divine chariot, and of the dramatic departure of the glory of God from the doomed city. What was the purpose of these messages of Ezekiel to the people in Babylonia?

Fourth day.—§ 185. *A city in panic:* Ezek. 12:1–28. Read the passage, and recall the prophet's effort to persuade his fellow-exiles in Babylonia that their distant capital, Jerusalem, will soon fall into the hands of the Babylonians, and its people will join them in captivity. Note the prophet's illustration of the manner in which the people of the city, with their blinded king, will dig through the walls to escape with their goods, and the panic that is to befall the inhabitants very soon. Now glance through chaps. 13–16, and notice the denunciations of the prophets who deny that Jerusalem shall fall and of the women who practice divination. Not even the most notable worthies of Israel could save the city now. Note also the elaborate comparison of Jerusalem to an unfaithful wife. Is the influence of Hosea apparent in this figure of speech?

Fifth day.—§ 186. *The cedar and the eagles:* Ezek. 17:1–24. Read the passage, and observe that, under the device of a cedar tree and two eagles, the prophet discusses the relations of Judah to Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, and Hophra the king of Egypt respectively. Now look through chaps. 18 and 19, and note that the prophet insists on the personal responsibility of each citizen and denies that trouble is the penalty of their fathers' sins; also that under the figure of two lions he refers to Israel and Judah, and of a vine, to the nation.

Sixth day.—§ 187. *Israel's wayward life:* Ezek. 20:1–49. Read the passage, and note the prophet's refusal to satisfy the curiosity of certain elders who came to know the divine will regarding the national future: and at the same time his lengthy discourse to them regarding Israel's past conduct from the days of Egypt to the present. Note particularly the charge of neglect of the Sabbath. Now glance through chaps. 21–24, and note the sighing of the prophet over the coming fate of Jerusalem; his reference to the sharpened sword, and to the divination of arrows that would bring the king of Babylon against Jerusalem: his threat against Ammon; his description of the immoralities of Jerusalem; his picture of Samaria and Jerusalem as the two vile sisters; and his notation of the day on which the siege of Jerusalem, far distant from Tel-abib, actually began; and finally the prophet's loss of his wife and his tearless grief.

Seventh day.—§ 188. *The fate of Jerusalem's neighbors:* Ezek. 25:1–17. Read the passage, and note that it begins the second section of the book, which includes chaps. 25–32, and seems to be a series of oracles written by Ezekiel to make clear the fate which is presently to befall all the nations around Judah, through the conquering might of Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon. Notice that in this chapter Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Philistia are warned of coming disaster. Now glance through chaps. 26–32, and note the long descriptions of the fate that is presently to overtake Tyre, Zidon, and Egypt. How did these oracles bear upon Ezekiel's theme of the speedy fall of Jerusalem?

Eighth day.—§ 189. *The city's fall:* Ezek. 33:1–33. Read the chapter, and note that the prophet insists that he is a watchman for Israel, responsible for warnings of her danger, and that predictions of good or evil are conditioned upon the conduct of the people. Note particularly the news of the downfall of Jerusalem, brought several months after the event by a messenger, twelve years after the first siege of the city when Ezekiel was taken into exile, or in 585 B.C. The despair that fell upon the Jews in Babylonia at this news it was now the prophet's task to lighten, and to this the remainder of the prophecy is devoted. Glance through chaps. 34–39, and note that the leaders or shepherds of the nation are held responsible for the evils of the time; the nations that have encroached upon the land of Judah are to be expelled; the nation is to be brought back; a national

resurrection is to take place; and when in the future a barbarian host comes against the land, it shall be destroyed in battle and buried by Israel.

Ninth day.—§ 190. *The new Jerusalem:* Ezek. 40:1–49. Read the chapter, and note that it begins the last section of the book, which pictures the restored Jerusalem, which is to be rebuilt by the returning people. The date is given as 572 B.C., and the prophet is taken in imagination and shown the fair vision of Judah's new capital. Now read chaps. 41–48, and see how this idea is carried out by the prophet in an ideal community, holy, priestly, and beneficent. Notice particularly the reference to the holy river that is to flow from the house of God and sweeten the waste places of the land. Thus with high hope for the future the book closes. Would it not have great influence in keeping hope alive during the Exile period?

Tenth day.—§ 191. *Voices of comfort:* Isa. 40:1–31. Read the chapter, and notice that the previous chapter belonged to the age of Hezekiah, whereas this one seems to be addressed to Israel in exile, troubled with the thought that God has forsaken them. See how the prophet cheers them by assuring them that God is preparing to lead his people back to their land; that though their leaders fall his word abides; that he is not to be likened to the idols of Babylon, and that those whom God strengthens shall not fail. Would it be appropriate to date this message in the later days of the Exile, about 545 B.C.?

Eleventh day.—§ 192. *The coming deliverer and the helpless idols:* Isa. 41:1–29. Read the chapter, and note that it opens with the startling announcement that a conqueror is coming from the East, at the summons of Jehovah. This is Cyrus of Persia, under whom Babylon, the tyrant holding Israel captive, shall fall. Against this power idols are a vain protection. Notice that Israel, called the servant of Jehovah, is encouraged with the assurance of divine help and the promise of return to the land. Notice the challenge to the gods of Babylon to predict the future, or show any proofs of their power. Cyrus is to come, and only Jehovah's prophet was able to predict it. What would be the effect of such a message upon the exiles?

Twelfth day.—§ 193. *The servant's task:* Isa. 42:1–25. Read the chapter, and see that the prophet says that the servant of Jehovah, the nation of Israel, is to perform his work of world-wide instruction and judgment in a quiet, unwarlike, but effective manner. Notice the emphasis upon God's arousal in behalf of the people; also that Israel has suffered severely, and seems unable to accomplish his task, but it is a part of the divine discipline. Would such a message give the exiles some idea of their importance to the program of God?

Thirteenth day.—§ 194. *The value of the servant:* Isa. 43:1–28. Read the chapter, and notice its appeal to the exiled Jews on the ground of the preciousness of the nation to God. They are to be protected and returned to their own land.

Jehovah, who alone foresees the future, depends upon his people to be his witnesses and vindicate him. Wonders are to be wrought in bringing Israel home across the desert. Their sufferings are the result of their forgetfulness of Jehovah's tenderness.

Fourteenth day.—§ 195. *The folly of the idol-makers:* Isa. 44:1–28. Read the passage, and note that Jehovah is to refresh and strengthen the people, his servant. Notice carefully the ironical description of idol manufacture, and the prophet's comment on people who trust in such gods. In contrast with these creatures, Jehovah redeems his people, rules history, raises up Cyrus to be his instrument, and restores the cities of Judah.

Fifteenth day.—§ 196. *Immutable purposes of Jehovah:* Isa. 45:1–25. Read the chapter, and notice the insistence of the prophet upon the recurring themes of the divine call of Cyrus for the liberation of Israel, the unchangeable plans of Jehovah, and the value and redemption of Israel destined to be the leader among the nations.

Sixteenth day.—§ 197. *The powerless gods of Babylon:* Isa. 46:1–13. Read the passage, and notice the sarcastic reference to the gods that will have to be carried away to save them from the hands of the foe. In contrast with these idols, note the reference to Jehovah, the maker and protector of Israel, and the appeal of the prophet to history as an encouragement to the people to trust in their God.

Seventeenth day.—§ 198. *The falling city of Babylon:* Isa. 47:1–15. Read the chapter, and note the taunting call to Babylon to come down from its seat of power and sit as a captive in the dust. Notice particularly the reference to the religious practices of the Babylonians as superstitions and forms of magic, futile to aid in the coming day of distress. The purpose of the passage is plainly the encouragement of the exiles to break the shackles of fear of their heathen rulers.

Eighteenth day.—§ 199. *The undeserving nation and its far-seeing God:* Isa. 48:1–22. Read the chapter, and note the appeal to the obstinate nation to believe the predictions now made regarding its speedy deliverance, because past prophecies have come true. For his own honor, not because of any worthiness of the people, Jehovah is thus prepared to deliver them. The mighty God, the creator, shall perform his pleasure on the Babylonians. If only Israel had been obedient, she would have avoided her present distress. Notice the call to Israel to leave Babylon for home, and to traverse the desert with rejoicing.

Nineteenth day.—§ 200. *The Servant's commission:* Isa. 49:1–26. Read the chapter, and note that the Servant, presumably personifying the discerning Israelites in exile, speaks of his call and his mission as an interpreter of God, and also of his consciousness of weakness and incompetence for his task. That task, he is assured, is to bring light to all the peoples as well as to restore the wavering

of his own nation. Note that the people are promised the favor of God, and a secure return to their land. For the abundance of population the reclaimed land shall be too small. The nations shall assist the exiles to return home to Palestine.

Twentieth day.—§ 201. *The Nation and the Servant:* Isa. 50:1–11. Read the passage, and note the divine insistence that only the sins of the people prevent the completion of the national program. God is able and willing to save them. Then note the voice of the Servant, the religious and discerning part of the nation, making clear the divine instruction for his task. Notice finally the admonition of the prophet. Observe that in the last section this figure of the Servant begins to emerge from and stand in contrast with the nation as a whole.

Twenty-first day.—§ 202. *Divine help for the exiles and Jerusalem:* Isa. 51: 1–23; 35:1–10. Read the chapter first cited, and note the encouragement given to the inner and obedient portion of the people in the name of God. Then notice the reference to the divine deliverance of Israel from Egypt in the past, and the promise of a return of the nation to Zion. Read Isa. 35:1–10, a fragment that appears to belong with chaps. 40–55, and notice the same thought of a return from Babylon to Jerusalem, and in part the very same words. Observe the charge to the exiles to be courageous and not fear their oppressors. Finally note the words of comfort to the city of Jerusalem, stricken by her enemies.

Twenty-second day.—§ 203. *Good tidings for Jerusalem:* Isa. 52:1–12. Read the passage, and mark the words of triumph and comfort for the exiles. Jerusalem and her people, spoiled alike by Egypt and Assyria, shall have a glorious future. Messengers appear upon the mountains around Jerusalem announcing the good news. The final call is to the exiles to leave the land of sorrow and return to their ancient home.

Twenty-third day.—§ 204. *The Servant's marvelous success:* Isa. 52:13—53:12. Read the passage, which should be treated as a unit. Notice that it deals in five sections or paragraphs with the Servant's achievement of his task. Remember that in the earlier chapters of this prophecy the Servant seemed to be the entire nation of Israel in the Exile. Later, especially in chap. 49, the Servant was rather the inner and better part of the people, who still kept faith with God. In the present passage, the thought advances a step farther, and either personifies the nation or deals with the experience of an individual, who, while he represents Israel, is able to achieve the results which were impossible otherwise. Observe that the first paragraph (52:13–15) announces that the Servant shall astonish men as much by his success as formerly by his humiliation. The second section (53:1–3) records the skepticism of the beholders regarding the Servant's success, and his unpromising appearance. The third (vss. 4–6) affirms that though all supposed he was paying the penalty of his errors, in reality he was suffering for his

unrepentant people. The fourth paragraph (vss. 7–9) makes clear the submissive spirit with which he endured his evil lot. And the fifth (vss. 10–12) points out the divine purpose that was accomplished in the Servant's sacrificial work, and the glorious reward he is to receive. In what sense are these words true of Jesus Christ? Is it necessary to keep in mind their national reference in order to apply them with any appropriateness to the Savior?

Twenty-fourth day.—§ 205. *Assurances to Zion:* Isa. 54:1–17. Read the chapter, and note that the prophet, speaking in behalf of God, promises the people that, though at times he seemed to forget them, such days shall not come again; but Jerusalem shall be rebuilt in glory, and the nation shall regain its prosperity. Keep in mind the effect of such promises to a people far from their homes in exile, and whose holy city is in ruins.

Twenty-fifth day.—§ 206. *The call to leadership:* Isa. 55:1–13. Read the chapter, and note that the prophet is addressing his countrymen, living in Babylonia, but losing their interest in their divine vocation as the interpreters of God. Babylon offered them great opportunities for trade, and as time went on the greater portion of them lost concern for their ancient faith and ideals. What if all had so given up their loyalty? The prophet seeks to recall them to their national purpose. God's word cannot be made void. But will they who have had the first right of world-leadership in things of the spirit fail of their high purpose? Note that these words are not addressed to the unbelieving world, but to the church, growing indifferent to her task, and content with a prosperity that cannot satisfy. Do you think these words might also apply appropriately to America as the prophet of God to the nations?

Twenty-sixth day.—§ 207. *Later words:* Isa. 56:1–12. Read the chapter, and notice that it belongs to the concluding section of the Book of Isaiah, and was probably written long after chaps. 40–55, when some of the exiles had returned, and had joined with the survivors of Judah in the rebuilding of the city and the nation. Now glance through chaps. 57–66, and note the references to conditions in Judah in post-exilic days; the allusion to the neighboring and hated Samaritans, with their worship on Mount Gerizim; the dangers of ceremonial religion; the depression of spirit caused by the gloomy outlook, since the brilliant hopes cherished formerly have been realized only in small part; encouragements to hope for better things; the perseverance of the revived people; the coming punishment of Edom for its hostility; the superstitions and magical practices that are abhorrent to the prophet's spirit; and the solemn words of warning at the end. It will be seen that this section of Isaiah has little in common with either chaps. 1–39 or chaps. 40–55.

Twenty-seventh day.—The Prophet Ezekiel. The man who for twenty-five years was a pastor of those exiles who lived at Tel-abib on the Chebar Canal in Babylonia was of priestly family, and probably in his thirtieth year (597 B.C.)

was taken with the other members of the first deportation from Jerusalem to Babylonia. His call to prophethood came five years later. All the earlier years of his ministry were spent in attempting to persuade his fellow-exiles that the disaster that had befallen them was necessary, and that worse things were in store, for Jerusalem must fall. When the news of that dire event reached them he used every effort to revive their shattered hopes, and assure them of a national future. His sermons were picturesque and vigorous. He must have exerted a strong influence over the people.

Twenty-eighth day.—The Book of Ezekiel. The forty-eight chapters which contain the messages of this prophet during his ministry in Babylonia fall into three sections. The first (chaps. 1–24) includes the discourses which record the prophet's call and his efforts to convince the people of the necessity that Jerusalem, as yet standing, must fall. The second (chaps. 25–32) contains the prophecies regarding the neighboring nations, which Ezekiel seems to have produced in the period of silence while he waited for news of the capture of Jerusalem. The third (chaps. 33–48) are messages of comfort and hope promising the exiles the restoration of their national life, and their return to Jerusalem. In our survey of this book it has been necessary to cover the material very rapidly, but some competent idea of its spirit and message may be gained even from this hasty reading. It was one of the messages that kept alive the national spirit in a time of great peril.

Twenty-ninth day.—The unknown prophet of hope. The author of Isa., chaps. 40–55, is unknown. It does not seem possible to assign this material to the author of chaps. 1–39. Probably the writer was one of the exiles, perhaps even a member of the community in which Ezekiel lived. If it be thought strange that his name should have remained unkown, it must be remembered that much of the literature of the Old Testament is anonymous, and, further, that the confident prediction of the triumph of Cyrus and the overthrow of Babylon would constitute a highly treasonable utterance in the judgment of Babylonian authorities. But whoever this prophet may have been, he contributed some of the most priceless sections to the literature of prophecy.

Thirtieth day.—The Book of Consolation. The portion of the Book of Isaiah here reviewed has four leading themes, constantly repeated and intermingled. The first is the assurance of the divine favor, in spite of past and present troubles, and the certainty of national restoration. The second is the greatness of Jehovah, the God of Israel, in comparison with the gods of Babylon. To the development of this theme some of the finest portions of the work are devoted. The third is the announcement that Cyrus of Persia, already moving on the frontiers of Babylonia, is Jehovah's appointed leader to bring down the pride of Babylon and release Israel from captivity. And the fourth is the manifold theme of the Servant of Jehovah, the nation of Israel long since chosen for the task of world-wide

instruction, but of late apparently weakened beyond all hope of achieving this great work. The prophet conceives it his duty, however, to arouse some portion of the people to their divine obligation, and with frank recognition of the Servant's lack of power, yet glowing hopes for the final success of his mission, he lifts the prophetic message to the highest levels of inspiration and confidence, picturing the wonder of the nations at the completion of the Servant's sacrificial labor.

Thirty-first day.—The value of the book. Not without reason has the judgment of mankind accorded this portion of Isaiah the most important place in the total volume of prophecy. It must have done much to revive the drooping soul of Israel in exile. It was the theme upon which both Christians and Jews dwelt with reverence and longing. And while in the former circles its meanings have been narrowed too frequently to the personal life of Jesus Christ, it is apparent that not without recognition of his service as the consummation of Hebrew history and the great sacrificial prophet of all time is this remarkable series of utterances to be understood. Jesus once said to the people of Judah, "Ye search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and those are they which bear witness of me."

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What event ended the unified political life of the inhabitants of Judah?
2. To what country were the choicest people of the land carried away?
3. Where was Babylonia, and what suggestions have we as to the location of the Hebrew people in Babylon and their life there?
4. What were the chief characteristics of the religion of the Babylonians by which the Jews were surrounded?
5. What prophet, whose words have come down to us, spoke to the people in exile?
6. What did he say concerning the city of Jerusalem and how did he interpret her calamities?
7. Name some of the characteristics of the imagery which he uses?
8. How long had the best of the people been in exile when the city of Jerusalem fell?
9. What effect did this event have upon the tone of Ezekiel's preaching to the exiles?
10. Why do we speak of the other great prophet of the Exile as the "unknown" prophet?
11. What is the general purpose of his messages?
12. What theory does he bring forward as to the mission of Israel?
13. How does he interpret the rise of Cyrus the Great and the magnitude of his conquests?

14. What in his estimation is to become of Babylon, and why?

15. In what terms does he describe Jehovah, the God of Israel?

16. What step does he urge the people to take as soon as the way is open?

17. Why was urging necessary?

18. What qualities as a poet and orator had this prophet?

19. Which do you consider the most beautiful passage that you have read from his writings?

20. What relation have ideal pictures of the future, earthly or eternal, to our own life and conduct?

STUDY IX

THE RESTORED JUDAH; LESSONS OF UPRIGHTNESS, DEVOTION, AND RELIANCE UPON JEHOVAH

In the year 538 B.C. the formal period of the Exile came to its close with the conquest of Babylonia by Cyrus the Great. This event, predicted by the unknown prophet of Isa., chaps. 40–55, made it possible for those of the exiles who wished to return to Palestine to depart. Few of them, however, were interested in the opportunity. The generation that knew Jerusalem was beyond the age to make the long journey back. Judah was largely in the hands of the unfriendly neighboring people. It was not easy to think of leaving the rich and comfortable East for the ruined fatherland. It was a heroic adventure, and few were ready to undertake it.

A company was gathered under a certain Sheshbazzar, and the sacred vessels from the old temple which had been preserved were taken along. Soon afterward another group led by Zerubbabel and Joshua followed. Probably the pilgrims were few in numbers, though a census report of later years made the total number of the returned several thousands. The altar was set up on the old site of the temple, and the Feast of Tabernacles was kept. Later still the foundations of the new temple were laid. But so few were the people, so slight was the co-operation between the native Jews of the land and the returned exiles and so depressing were the circumstances, that nearly twenty years passed before any serious efforts were made to build the temple, and meantime the city remained in much the same forlorn condition as when it was left dismantled by Nebuchadrezzar in 586 B.C. At length the energy and patriotism of two prophets, apparently natives of Judah and not members of the exile group, brought to the mind of the little community the duty of continuing and completing the erection of the house of God. These prophets were Haggai and Zechariah.

First day.—§ 208. *Haggai's summons to Judah:* Hag. 1:1–15; Ezra, chaps. 1–3. Read the Haggai passage, and notice that it is dated in September of 520 B.C., in the time when Darius of Persia was endeavoring to establish his power over the kingdom of which Cyrus had been the first ruler. Notice that the prophet's message is addressed to the two heads of the community, and the claim is made that the poverty of the people is due to the neglect of the temple-building

project. Observe that as a result of the prophet's words a fresh start is made on that building. Now read Ezra, chaps. 1–3, the story of the earliest return from Babylonia, and the unsuccessful effort then made to build the temple.

Second day.—§ 209. *Three later oracles of Haggai:* Hag. 2:1–23; Ezra 5:1, 2. Read the Haggai passage, and note that it contains three other messages of the same prophet. The first of these is dated in October of 520 B.C., and is intended to encourage those who thought the temple small as compared with that of Solomon. Jehovah would yet shake into the lap of Judah the wealth of the nations. Notice that the next oracle dates from December of the same year, and insists that the ill-success of Judah thus far has been due to its religious uncleanness; but that henceforth it shall prosper, since the work on the temple has actually begun. Note that the last of the three oracles, on the same day as the previous one, promises further divine help, and the favor of God to the governor, Zerubbabel. Now read Ezra 5:1, 2 and note its reference to the successful efforts of the two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, to promote the enterprise of temple erection.

Third day.—§ 210. *Admonition and vision:* Zech. 1:1–21. Read the passage, and note that the first portion is dated in November of 520 B.C., and contains an exhortation not to fall into the sins of the fathers to whom the earlier prophets spoke. Then notice that the remainder of the chapter is devoted to two visions, which, together with six others, whose description runs as far as 6:8, are dated together in January, 519 B.C. The first is a vision of angel riders, who have visited all parts of the earth, and report, much to the chagrin of the prophet and the angel who talked with him, that the nations are at peace, i.e., that the Persian Empire is likely to achieve complete control. Judah had hoped for independence. Yet the prophet seeks to reassure his people of the divine favor in spite of unpropitious signs. The second vision pictures Judah's foes as four horns, which are to be broken down. What was the value of such oracles?

Fourth day.—§ 211. *The man with the measuring line:* Zech. 2:1–13. Read the passage, which contains the third vision of the series, and note its purpose to reassure the people of Jerusalem regarding the city's lack of walls. Notice that the man (angel) who is about to measure the city for a new set of walls is told that it is unnecessary, for Jehovah is its protection, and no wall could be great enough for the future multitude of its people. Observe that the remainder of the chapter seems to be an appeal to the Jews yet dwelling in Babylonia to come to Judah and assist in re-establishing Zion.

Fifth day.—§ 212. *Priest and prince:* Zech. 3:1–10. Read, and recall that Joshua was the representative of the priestly function in Judah, and Zerubbabel of the government. Note that in the vision Joshua is seen in unbecoming garments in a court of justice, accused by the Satan, the prosecutor or maligner of

the nation. Jehovah intervenes in behalf of his servant, and he is reinstated in his rightful place. The admonition to faithfulness is given by the angel of the Lord, and the promise made that the branch, i.e., the prince, Zerubbabel, shall also be honored. Thus the assurance is given that God watches over his people through their appointed heads.

Sixth day.—§ 213. *The candlestick of gold:* Zech. 4:1–14; Exod. 25:31–40. Read the Zechariah passage, and, in connection with it, Exod. 25:31–40, the description of the golden candlestick in the tabernacle. Now note that in the passage in Zechariah the seven lamps represent the divine presence in the sacred community, and the trees that supply the oil are the heads of the state and church, Zerubbabel and Joshua. Would it thus seem to be the purpose of the prophet to inspire a greater degree of loyalty toward their leaders on the part of the people?

Seventh day.—§ 214. *The cleansing of the land:* Zech. 5:1–11. Read the passage, and note that it describes two more visions, the sixth and seventh of the series. In the first a great roll or banner is displayed, denouncing curses upon such as steal or swear falsely. In the second, a woman personifying the spirit of dishonesty and injustice is put into a measure, a weight is placed upon her, and she is carried away to her proper place, the land of Shinar or Babylon. Would it seem that by these figures the prophet is trying to make clear the need of commercial honor in the little community, and the necessity of getting rid of fraud?

Eighth day.—§ 215. *The horses and the crown:* Zech. 6:1–15. Read the chapter, and note that the first eight verses contain the eighth and final vision of the series that began in 1:7, and all of which belonged to one day. This one seems to imply the divine purpose and activity in all the world. These chariots of the four winds carry the government and discipline of Jehovah to all nations. Probably special reference to Babylon is intended in the mention of the northern land. Note that in the second part of the chapter reference seems to be made to the coming of certain Jews from Babylon with a gift of silver and gold, which is made into a crown or crowns for the head or the heads of the community. The passage is obscure. Was the effort made to set up Judah as an independent province under Zerubbabel? Was it unsuccessful? Is this the reason why Zerubbabel disappears from the record?

Ninth day.—§ 216. *The fasts and the divine command:* Zech. 7:1–14. Read the passage, and note that it raises the question as to whether the fasts commemorative of the tragic days in the siege of Jerusalem ought to be observed still. What is the prophet's answer? Notice also that the second part of the chapter gives a fresh expression to the divine desire for true judgment, mercy, and compassion in the attitude of the people toward each other. The fathers have been warned of this in the past, but have not heeded the admonition. Their national tragedies are due to this fact. For this reason the land has been desolate so long.

Tenth day.—§ 217. *Messages of comfort:* Zech. 8:1–23. Read the chapter, and note that its tone is one of encouragement to the people of Jerusalem, who must have found conditions very disheartening in the period of the two prophets Haggai and Zechariah. Note the promise of children and old people to the town, whose people were chiefly the middle-aged who had made the return journey from the land of exile. Notice also the repeated promises that all unfavorable conditions shall be changed for the better, coupled with exhortations to good conduct. Even the fast days are to be observed with gladness and feasting. In the days to come all the nations shall crave the privilege of joining with them in the blessing of God.

Eleventh day.—§ 218. *The King of Peace:* Zech. 9:1–17, chaps. 10, 11. Read the passage first cited and note that it appears to have no relation to the eight chapters that precede it, but to belong to a later, but indefinite, period. Now read chaps. 10 and 11, and notice that they seem to belong to the same section of the book. The time is probably somewhere late in the Old Testament period. There is no reigning king. The shepherds, or national leaders, are untrustworthy. Jehovah alone can bring victory over the nations that are hostile, or bring them to repentance. At times there is a hope that the ancient relations between North and South may be re-established. Later this seems to fade. The one bright picture is that of the ideal messianic king, who is to come riding on the animal of peace, and destroying the weapons of war, bringing peace in all the world.

Twelfth day.—§ 219. *The future of Jerusalem:* Zech. 12:1–14; chaps. 13, 14. Read the first passage, and note that it is the prophecy of a time when Jerusalem, penitent for its sin, and mourning because of its unfaithfulness to Jehovah, shall be invincible against the nations that seek its overthrow. Now read chaps. 13 and 14, and note that they have the same late and apocalyptic tone. Notice the vivid description of the conflict in 14:1–5, and the picture of the days of happiness to follow, in the later portion of the chapter. The general indefiniteness and the apocalyptic character of chaps. 9–11 and chaps. 12–14 lead to the conclusion that they are late, independent, and anonymous additions to the Book of Zechariah. Their value is found in their insistence upon the future glory of Judah, in spite of the evils of the unknown periods from which they come.

Thirteenth day.—§ 220. *Unworthy offerings:* Mal. 1:1–14. Read this chapter, and notice that vss. 2–5 seem to refer to some recent disaster to Edom, the hated nation, south of the Dead Sea. The prophet denies its boast that it shall ever revive again. But note that the chief theme of the chapter is the dishonor done to Jehovah in bringing to the temple offerings that are imperfect. The prophet challenges the people to bring such gifts to their Persian governor. How

would he regard such treatment? How dare they then bring blemished offerings to the temple? Notice that the date is sometime after the completion of the temple, perhaps about 425 B.C.

Fourteenth day.—§ 221. *Priests and people:* Mal. 2:1–17. Read the chapter, and note that the first part is an indictment of the priesthood for slackness in the work of instruction and leadership. This continues the thought of chap. 1, that the temple services are neglected, and that religion is made a matter of slight regard. The second part of the passage denounces the growing custom of marrying non-Jewish wives, with the attendant evil of the divorce of the Jewish women, to whom the first and exclusive right of marriage is due. This would seem to imply that the drastic reforms of Ezra have already taken place, but are in danger of being forgotten.

Fifteenth day.—§ 222. *The coming messenger:* Mal. 3:1—4:6; Matt. 17:9–13. Read the passage, and note the divine promise (or threat) that "my messenger" (in Hebrew *malachi;* does the book, otherwise anonymous, derive its name from this word?) is soon to come for judgment and correction. Who are the people threatened in this passage? Notice the charge that they have robbed God by withholding the tithes from the sanctuary. What are they commanded to do? Observe the reference to the popular complaint of the weariness and uselessness of the service of God. Also note the allusion to the inner group of the faithful, in whom God delights. Observe that the last chapter in the Old Testament opens with an announcement of the Day of Jehovah, a day of punishment and of reward, and closes with the prediction of the Coming of Elijah, the divine messenger of preparation, before the day of Jehovah shall come. Read Matt. 17:9–13 for Jesus' comment on this text.

Sixteenth day.—§ 223. *The locust plague:* Joel 1:1–20. Read this vivid passage, and note that it is a description of the havoc wrought by uncounted swarms of locusts, one of the most destructive plagues from which Palestine suffers occasionally. All vegetation is consumed, and all classes of people suffer. The people are bidden to supplicate God for deliverance, and the priests to call a sacrificial feast. All nature is in distress.

Seventeenth day.—§ 224. *The terrible army of invasion:* Joel 2:1–17. Read the passage, and note that it continues to describe the locust plague as if it were the invasion of a mighty army. Nothing can withstand its approach. Then God bids the people turn to him for deliverance, and proclaim a solemn fast, to secure his protection. It is apparent that the prophet, living in some later period of Old Testament history, perhaps about 350 B.C., takes advantage of a terrible calamity to call upon the people for true repentance.

Eighteenth day.—§ 225. *The divine promise of better days:* Joel 2:18–32; Acts 2:14–21. Read the passage, and notice that the solemn fast proclaimed

in vss. 15–17 seems to have wrought its purpose, and Jehovah now promises relief and prosperity. The locusts are to be blown away east and west; the rains are to come; the destroyed vegetation is to be revived; and the people shall again have abundance, and rejoice in their God. Then notice particularly the promise of the outpouring of the spirit of God upon the entire nation, young and old alike; and mighty signs shall announce the coming Day of Jehovah, from whose terror only those who call upon his name shall escape. Read Acts 2:14–21 for Peter's claim that this passage was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost.

Nineteenth day.—§ 226. *The triumph of Zion:* Joel 3:1–21. Read the chapter, and note that it announces a great world-battle in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, outside of Jerusalem, where the nations, gathered for the overthrow of the holy people, shall themselves be overthrown. Amid terrible portents Jehovah shall show himself the destroyer of his foes and the refuge of his people. The future of the nation shall be prosperous and glorious. Does not Joel seem to lay strong emphasis upon the national idea, and to manifest a spirit of fierce animosity against the neighboring nations? Is it probable that the "all flesh" of 2:28 refers to any others than Jews?

Twentieth day.—§ 227. *The disobedient prophet:* Jonah 1:1–17. Read the chapter, and note that it tells the story of a prophet who, bidden to go and preach a message of repentance to the hated city of Nineveh, seeks to escape by taking ship in the opposite direction. Notice that the sympathy of the writer of the book is rather with the considerate heathen sailors than with the disobedient Hebrew prophet. Notice that the point of vs. 17 is the author's means of getting Jonah, chastened and humbled, back on land to undertake the mission which he evaded at first.

Twenty-first day.—§ 228. *Out of the depths:* Jonah 2:1–10; Pss. 18, 116, 120, 142. Read the poem, and consider whether it describes one in Jonah's situation, or a shipwrecked man. Also read Pss. 18, 116, 120, 142, and notice that the poem appears to be made up of fragments of these and other psalms, rather than to be the utterance of a specific occasion. Would you regard the swallowing up of Jonah and his return to land illustrative of the fate of Israel in exile, and of their later deliverance?

Twenty-second day.—§ 229. *The marvelous repentance of Nineveh:* Jonah 3:1–10. Read the passage, and notice that the prophet now goes obediently on his mission to the Assyrian city. Notice the astonishing results of the preaching, both people and beasts joining in the fasting and putting on of sackcloth. Is this probable as a historical narrative, or is it, more likely, a parable of widespread repentance, placed in the distant past when Nineveh was an existing city? Is there any other record of a Hebrew prophet bringing a great heathen capital to repentance? What is the probable purpose of the story?

Twenty-third day.—§ 230. *The petulant prophet and the merciful God:* Jonah 4:1–11. Read the passage, and note Jonah's displeasure at the success of his appeal. Why is he angry? What is his complaint against God? Where does the prophet take refuge, and why does he stay near Nineveh? What brings comfort to Jonah? What brings that comfort to an end? How does Jonah's anger regarding the gourd contrast with his unconcern about the city? How does the latter contrast with the divine pity and sympathy? Would the Book of Jonah be an effective protest against the narrowness and race prejudice of the Book of Joel? Is the Book of Jonah a fitting close to the prophetic literature of the Old Testament?

Twenty-fourth day. The Book of Haggai. Read again the two chapters of this book and notice the dates of the four oracles, in the year 520 B.C. Consider the fact that for nearly eighteen years nothing had been done by the returned exiles in Jerusalem to build the temple. Was it not time someone should awaken the people to their forgotten task? Notice how different is the tone of this prophet from that of the great prophets of the classic period, who are chiefly concerned with ethical and social duties. Haggai feels the supreme importance of restoring the temple and its ritual. Was this the greatest need of the times?

Twenty-fifth day. The Book of Zechariah. Read again chaps. 1–8, and note the date, as contemporary with Haggai. Notice also the pictorial, figurative character of the work, the number of angels and other apocalyptic features. Also notice the prophet's effort, by symbols, visions, and other devices, to reassure the people, much depressed by the poverty and seeming failure of Jerusalem. Notice also that both Haggai and Zechariah do all in their power to uphold the authority and vindicate the position of Zerubbabel and Joshua, the two leading men in the little community. Recall chaps. 9–11 and 12–14, and that these seem to be later and still more apocalyptic additions to the book, whose relation to chaps. 1–8 it is not possible to discover.

Twenty-sixth day. The Book of Malachi. Re-read the book, and note that it seems to come from an age when the temple was completed, but when the city was still very poor, and the services of religion much neglected. It calls both priests and people sharply to account, particularly for unworthy gifts to the sanctuary, and marriages with heathen women. It also announces the near approach of the Day of the Lord, so often mentioned by the prophets. It is a trumpet-call to remembrance of liturgical duties as a means of safety.

Twenty-seventh day. The Book of Joel. Read again the book, and note that, as in former works of prophecy, an event of dire significance is made the text of a religious message. The event is a locust plague of unusual severity. On the

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basis of this visitation the people are summoned to repentance and fasting. As a result of this supposed action, relief is promised, and the favor of God is made sure. The book is intensely Jewish. The blessings of God are for Israel alone. The other nations are to be destroyed. It represents the type of particularism which grew from the ground of Ezekiel's message and issued in the Pharisaism of Jesus' day. The date of the book may be set down conjecturally as about 350 B.C.

Twenty-eighth day. The Book of Jonah. Of about the same date as Joel, this little volume, probably the latest of the prophetic books, is a ringing protest against the narrowness and conservatism of later Judaism and a plea for the world-wide sympathy of Israel toward its neighbors. The plea is made in the form of a tradition connected with the ancient prophet Jonah, who lived in the reign of Jeroboam II. The prophet hardly plays a heroic part, but his prejudice is placed in striking contrast with the divine sympathy for even a heathen city. It will be remembered that Jesus used the repentance of Nineveh as a contrast with the unbelief of his own people.

Twenty-ninth day. The social teachings of the later prophets. It will be noted that the chief interest of this latest group of prophets is religious, even ecclesiastical, rather than social. Their concern is for the political fortunes of Jerusalem. They feel that only by the rebuilding and conservation of the temple can the community find favor with God. This is particularly the thesis of the first three. Only incidentally do matters of social justice find a place in their program.

Thirtieth day. Moral ideals of the later prophets. With these men the moralities were largely blended with religious considerations. If they denounced, as does Zechariah, cheating, and false swearing, and fraud in weights and measures, it is chiefly because the community is holy to Jehovah, and such conduct will forfeit his regard. If the people are forbidden to intermarry with the heathen, it is not so much that such conduct is unethical, far less that it is unusual in Israel, but rather that it is abhorrent to the holy God, who wished his people to be separate from all nations.

Thirty-first day. Religious teachings of the later prophets. As already noted, the chief points of emphasis in these prophetic works of the late period are religious, and they are closely connected with ritual and ceremony. The temple is essential to the life and prosperity of the community. The sacrifices and tithes must not be neglected. The priests must remember their vocation, and keep themselves ceremonially fit. Only in Jonah do we catch a vision of a world-wide message of good-will, based on the character of God and his relation to all men. This makes that beautiful book a fitting close to the prophetic literature of the Old Testament.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the date of the conquest of Babylonia by Cyrus and the relief of the Jews in exile?

2. What conditions did the Jews returning to Jerusalem find there?

3. Tell what you can about the building of the new temple.

4. What part did the prophets take in it, and who were they?

5. Describe and explain the significance of three of Zechariah's visions.

6. What part of the Book of Zechariah belongs to this period, and what part to a later period?

7. Against what evils did Malachi speak?

8. What is the meaning of the word Malachi? and what significance has it as the title of the book of this name?

9. How does the prophecy of Joel illustrate the habit of the prophets in regard to making use of current conditions?

10. Was this a sincere interpretation of the times, on their part, or an oratorical device?

11. What is the spiritual message of the writer of the Book of Jonah?

12. How many miracles does this book record?

13. Would the story be effective today in preaching against race prejudice?

14. What need have we of a sermon on this theme today?

15. What do you think about ritual as an instrument of worship? Under what conditions might it assist or retard sincere worship?

16. What have you gained from your study of the prophets?

17. Which of them do you think is the most interesting and why?

18. Give a paraphrase of any one of the great passages from the prophets which you admire most.

19. What would you consider a definition of a modern prophet?

20. Can you point to any such? If so, who is he?

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